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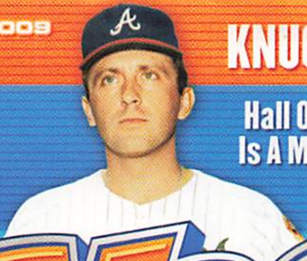

**KNUCKSIE'S PITCH**

Hall Of Famer Phil Niekro
Is A Man In Great Demand

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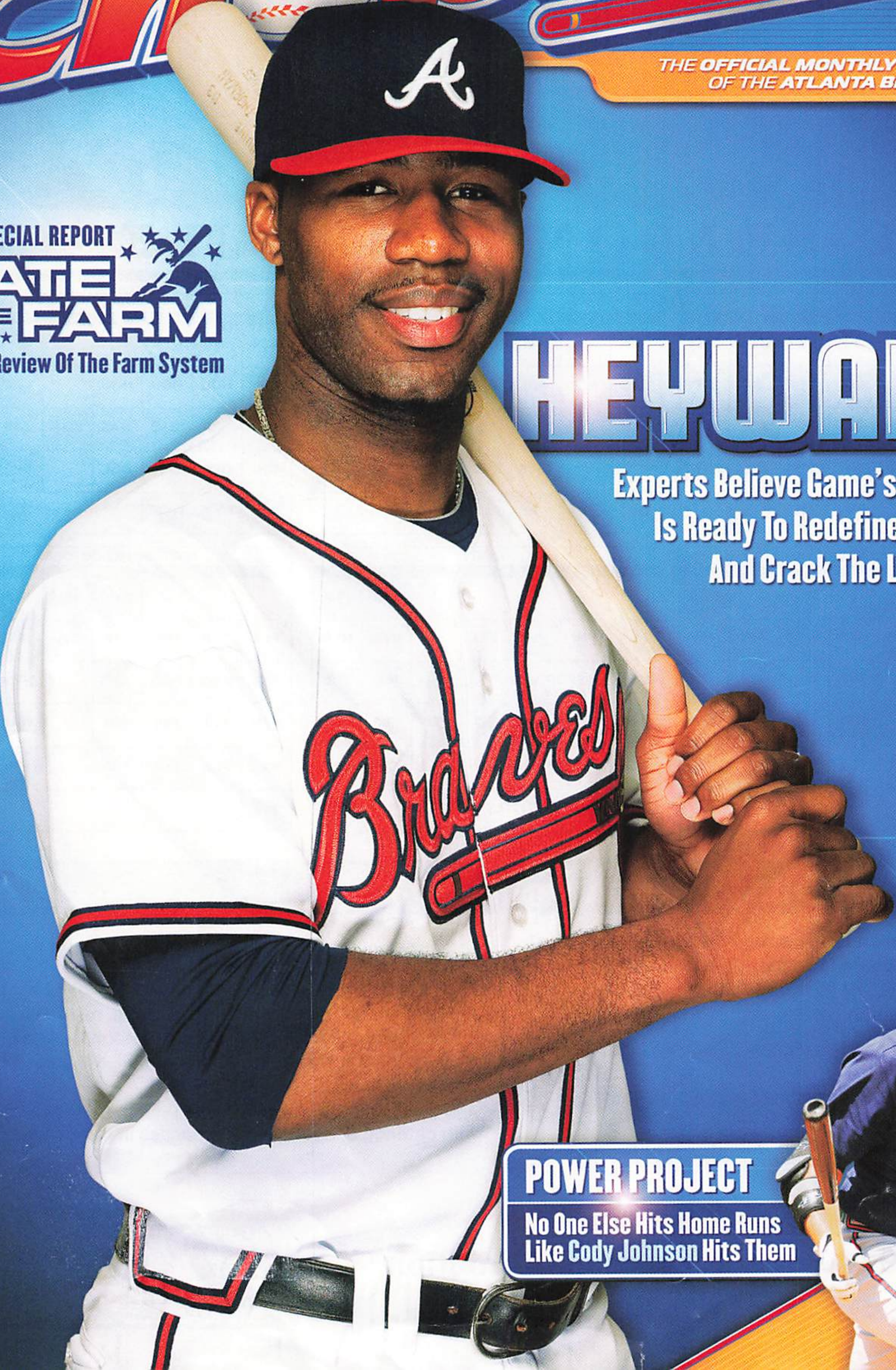


**14-PAGE SPECIAL REPORT**

**STATE OF THE FARM**

Our Annual Review Of The Farm System

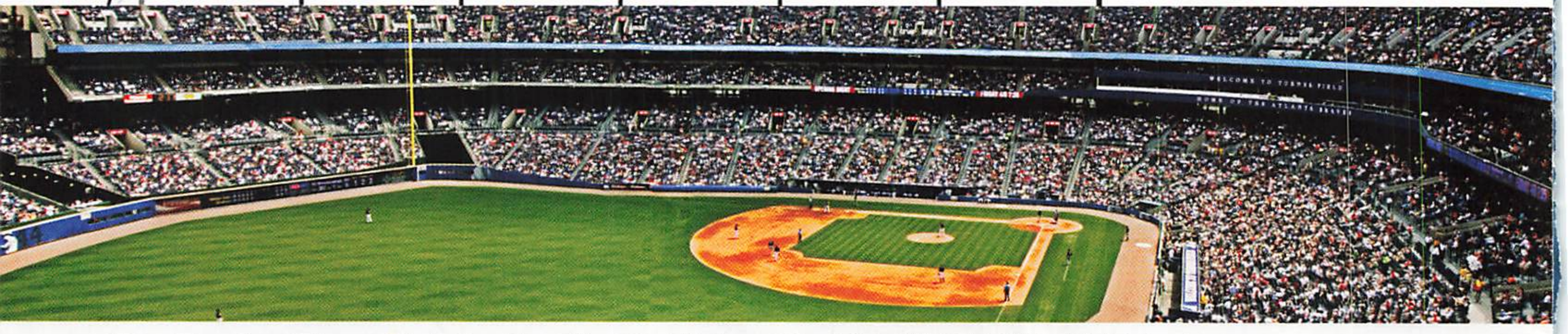
## HEYWARD!

Experts Believe Game's Top Prospect
Is Ready To Redefine "Fast Track"
And Crack The Lineup In 2010

**POWER PROJECT**

No One Else Hits Home Runs
Like Cody Johnson Hits Them

# THE MAGIC OF TURNER FIELD



# 2010 SEASON SCHEDULE

### APRIL

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 CWS EXH* | 3 CWS EXH* |
| 4 | 5 CHI | 6 | 7 CHI | 8 CHI | 9 SF | 10 SF |
| 11 SF | 12 SD | 13 SD | 14 SD | 15 | 16 COL | 17 COL |
| 18 COL | 19 | 20 PHI | 21 PHI | 22 PHI | 23 NYM | 24 NYM |
| 25 NYM | 26 STL | 27 STL | 28 STL | 29 STL | 30 HOU | |

### JUNE

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 PHI | 2 PHI | 3 LAD | 4 LAD | 5 LAD |
| 6 LAD | 7 ARI | 8 ARI | 9 ARI | 10 ARI | 11 MIN | 12 MIN |
| 13 MIN | 14 | 15 TB | 16 TB | 17 TB | 18 KC | 19 KC |
| 20 KC Father's Day | 21 | 22 CWS | 23 CWS | 24 CWS | 25 DET | 26 DET |
| 27 DET | 28 WAS | 29 WAS | 30 WAS | | | |

### AUGUST

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 CIN | 2 NYM | 3 NYM | 4 NYM | 5 SF | 6 SF | 7 SF |
| 8 SF | 9 HOU | 10 HOU | 11 HOU | 12 | 13 LAD | 14 LAD |
| 15 LAD | 16 LAD | 17 WAS | 18 WAS | 19 WAS | 20 CHI | 21 CHI |
| 22 CHI | 23 COL | 24 COL | 25 COL | 26 | 27 FLA | 28 FLA |
| 29 FLA | 30 NYM | 31 NYM | | | | |

### MAY

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 HOU |
| 2 HOU | 3 | 4 WAS | 5 WAS | 6 WAS | 7 PHI | 8 PHI |
| 9 PHI | 10 MIL | 11 MIL | 12 MIL | 13 | 14 ARI | 15 ARI |
| 16 ARI | 17 NYM | 18 NYM | 19 CIN | 20 CIN | 21 PIT | 22 PIT |
| 23 PIT | 24 | 25 FLA | 26 FLA | 27 FLA | 28 PIT | 29 PIT |
| 30 PIT | 31 PHI Memorial Day | | | | | |

### JULY

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 FLA | 3 FLA |
| 4 FLA Independence Day | 5 PHI | 6 PHI | 7 PHI | 8 | 9 NYM | 10 NYM |
| 11 NYM | 12 ALL-STAR GAME ANAHEIM | 13 | 14 | 15 MIL | 16 MIL | 17 MIL |
| 18 MIL | 19 | 20 SD | 21 SD | 22 SD | 23 FLA | 24 FLA |
| 25 FLA | 26 | 27 WAS | 28 WAS | 29 WAS | 30 CIN | 31 CIN |

**SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

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### SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER

| S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1 NYM | 2 NYM | 3 FLA | 4 FLA |
| 5 FLA | 6 PIT | 7 PIT | 8 PIT | 9 STL | 10 STL | 11 STL |
| 12 STL | 13 WAS | 14 WAS | 15 WAS | 16 | 17 NYM | 18 NYM |
| 19 NYM | 20 PHI | 21 PHI | 22 PHI | 23 | 24 WAS | 25 WAS |
| 26 WAS | 27 FLA | 28 FLA | 29 FLA | 30 | 1 PHI | 2 PHI |
| 3 PHI | | | | | | |

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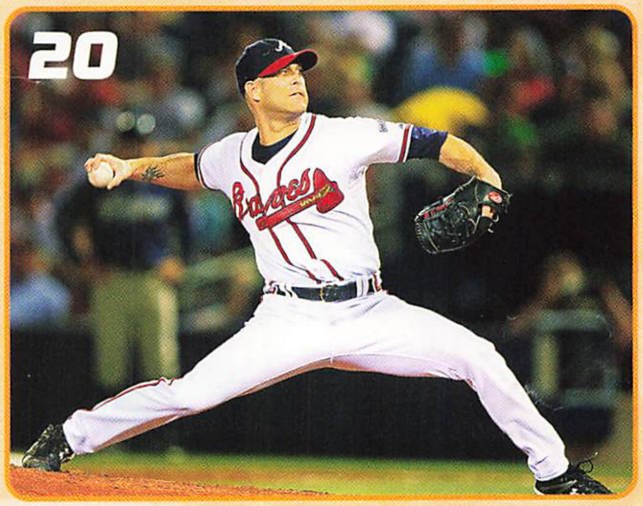
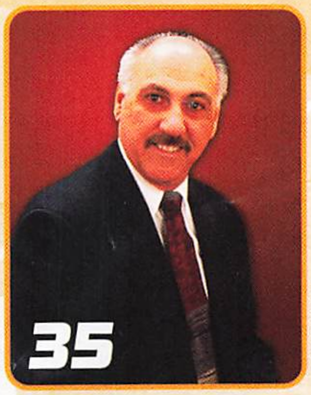


ATLANTA BRAVES

ATLANTA BRAVES



ATLANTA BRAVES

**COVER CREDITS**
JASON HEYWARD
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Phil Niekro: Atlanta Braves
Cody Johnson: Bill Setliff
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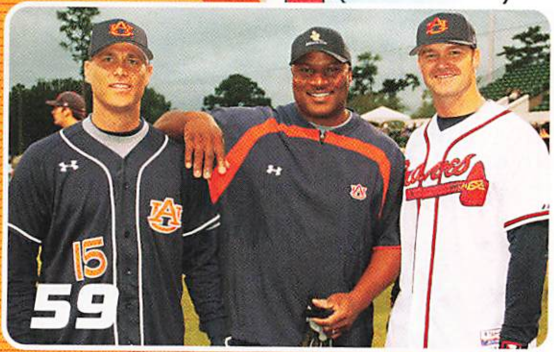

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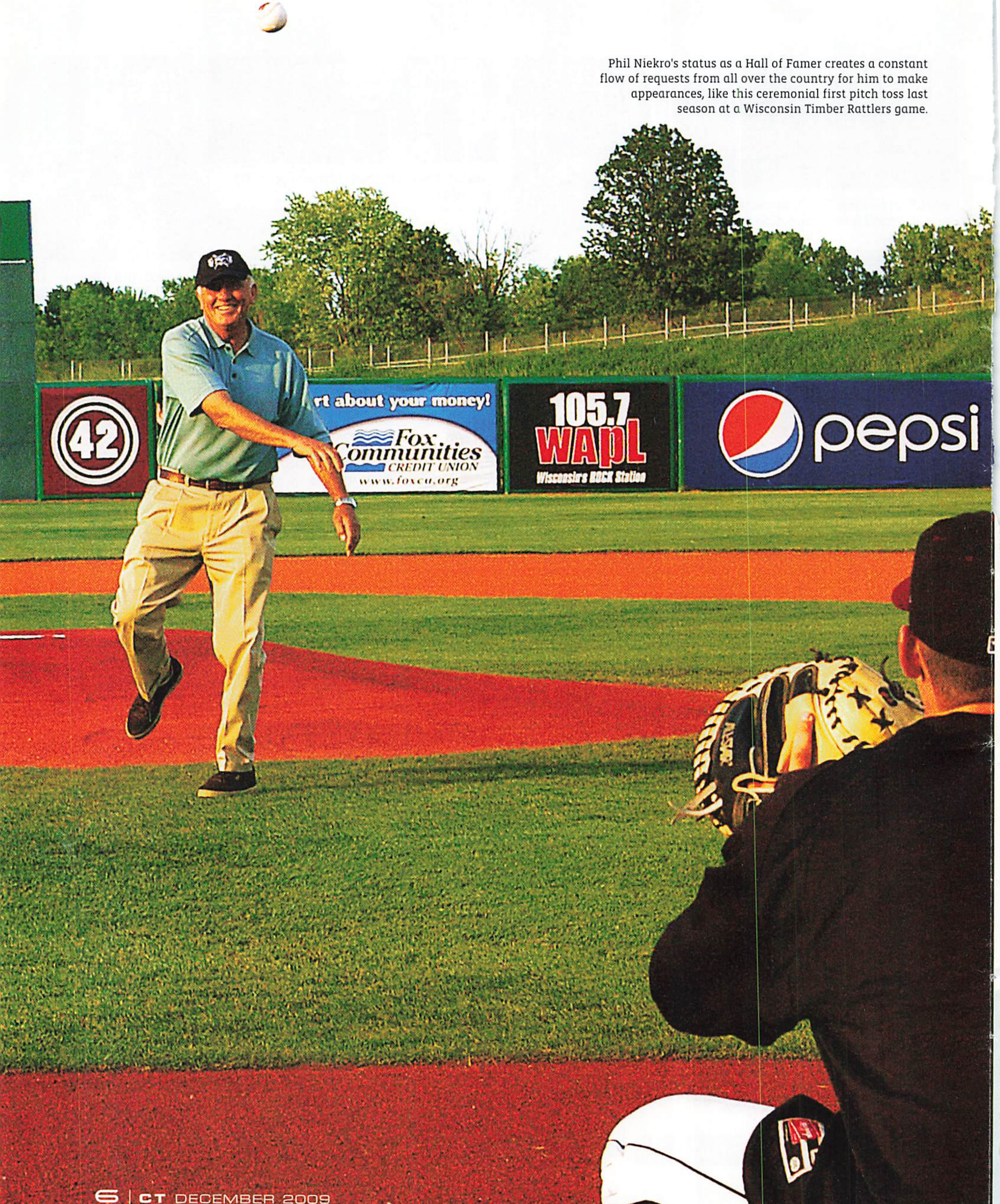
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Phil Niekro's status as a Hall of Famer creates a constant flow of requests from all over the country for him to make appearances, like this ceremonial first pitch toss last season at a Wisconsin Timber Rattlers game.

### Hall Of Famer And Consummate Good Guy Phil Niekro Is A Man In Great Demand

# KNUCKSIE'S PITCH

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

A couple of years after Tommy Nobis became the first player ever to sign with the NFL's Atlanta Falcons in 1966, he was given a piece of advice by another star athlete in Atlanta.

"Phil Niekro pulled me aside and said, 'Now that you're part of this community, you need to make sure you're out there doing good,'" recalled Nobis, a member of the College Football Hall of Fame and winner of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Memorial Award for his extensive work on behalf of people with disabilities. "He inspired me."

ATLANTA BRAVES

Niekro holds numerous Atlanta Braves records, including wins (266), shutouts (43), starts (594), innings (4,533) and complete games (226) and ranks second in ERA (3.20), games (689) and strikeouts (2,855).

And Niekro still inspires. Even though Nobis wasn't able to play in one of Niekro's charity golf tournaments, he showed up bright and early on a November morning to support Niekro.

Known as one of the nicest guys who ever put on a major league uniform, Hall of Fame pitching legend Phil Niekro also was a pitcher no one wanted to face. Bobby Murcer, the late New York Yankees All-Star outfielder, once said of Niekro, "Trying to hit him is like trying to eat Jell-O with chopsticks."

In other words it was practically impossible at times.

During his 24-year career, 20 of which he spent with the Braves (1964-83, '87), Niekro used his signature knuckleball to make some of the game's best hitters look inept at home plate. His baseball credentials speak for themselves.

Niekro boasts a lifetime record of 318 wins (268 as a Brave), 14th all-time, a career 3.35 ERA, made five All-Star appearances (1969, 1975, 1978, 1982, 1984), won five Gold Gloves (1978-1980, 1982, 1983), and holds numerous Atlanta pitching records. He won 23 games and finished second in the NL Cy Young voting in 1969 when the Braves won their first division title in Atlanta, and he was 17-4, leading the league in winning percentage (.810) when they won their second division title in 1982.

In 1997, Niekro was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. His number, 35, was retired by the Braves in 1984, and he was an inaugural inductee into the Braves Hall of Fame in 1999.

But Niekro's off-the-field exploits, for which he received the 1979 Lou Gehrig Award and the 1980 Roberto Clemente Award, are equally significant. In fact, he would argue they're even more important than baseball in the larger scheme of things.

Passionate about causes, especially when children are involved, Niekro said, "If I get a call to appear and it's local and charitable, I'll go. If it's out of town, I check my schedule and go if I can. As long as it doesn't interfere with my grandson, Chase's baseball game, I'll try to be there!"

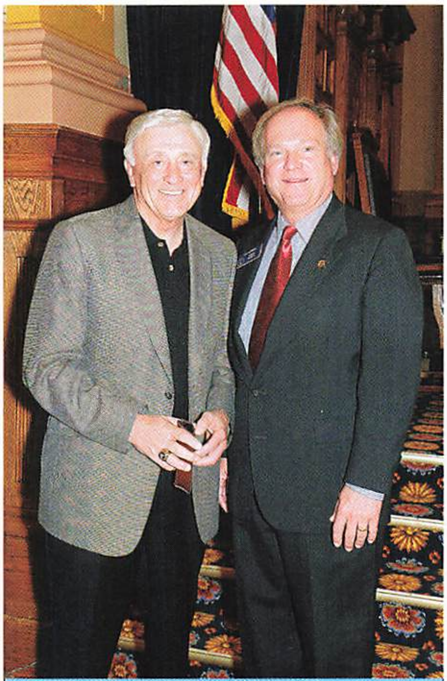
That's Niekro in a nutshell. Family is at the crux of his character.

"My family inspired me when I was growing up," said Niekro, "My brother, Joe, my parents, my grandparents. I know what having a good family means."

He had an especially close relationship with his younger brother, Joe, a successful major league pitcher in his own right. The brothers were teammates on the Braves in 1973 and 1974 and they still hold the record for the most wins (539) by two brothers in the history of baseball. Joe died suddenly at

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

WISCONSIN TIMBER RATTLERS



SPECIAL

Lee Hawkins (R), a long-time friend of Niekro's, calls him the "real deal" and asked him to be the campaign chairman for his run at the U.S. Congress.

age 61 of a brain aneurysm in October 2006. Phil said he draws on that relationship as a source of inspiration in his life and in the speeches he makes.

"I almost always tell groups I'm talking to that there are 86,400 seconds in a day, and it only takes two seconds to say, 'I love you,'" he said. "Joe and I used to talk nearly every day, and we always ended our conversations with, 'I love you.' I'm glad that those were the last words I said to him, and those were the last words he said to me."

"Very few people have as large a heart as Phil Niekro," said Georgia state senator Dr. Lee Hawkins, a longtime friend of Niekro's. "He's the real deal."

Hawkins admires Niekro, 70, so much that he asked him to throw a few pitches on his behalf as campaign chairman of his bid for the U.S. Congressional seat in Georgia's Ninth District where they both live. It was something Niekro had never done, but that didn't stop him from saying "yes" to his friend.

"I've known Lee for a long time," said Niekro. "He's in the medical profession, so he has a good handle on health care reform, and I know where he stands on things of interest to the people in our district."

Working behind the scenes suits Niekro, who said he's been approached many times about running for political office.

"I'm just not a politician," he said. "I'm not sure how long I'd last, and it would take too much time away from my family."

Given his dedication to family, it's no surprise that he turns to his wife, Nancy, and son, Steve, for help in scheduling his calendar and making travel arrangements. They talk about requests that come in, look over the calendar, and make sure there are no family conflicts. It's nothing new for Nancy, who managed their family life during Phil's playing days (1964-87 in the majors).

"I give her a lot of credit," he said. "She kept everything in line, watched and managed our money. Nancy's the one who dotted all the 'i's' and crossed the 't's'."

Even when he's out of town, Niekro tries to schedule his travel so he's back by Sunday. "We all go to Mass together," he said. "We go to brunch and then come to the house to spend the day together, either playing games or whatever. It's our day."

From his home base, a beautiful house situated on a secluded inlet along the banks of Lake Lanier about 40 miles north of Atlanta, Niekro takes to the bully pulpit he earned during his baseball career, raising money and awareness for a variety of causes. Though he goes wherever the event takes him, he's already made a significant impact right in his own backyard.

The Phil Niekro Golf Classic, held the past 13 years, helped raise funds to build and sustain the Edmondson-Telford Center for Children, a non-profit, state-of-the-art facility serving the needs of abused or neglected children in Hall County.

"The new facility opened in August (2009), and the playroom is named after Phil," said Jane Carpenter, program director at the center. "But Phil isn't just a name around here. He's been a huge part of the center."

Niekro's involvement beyond lending his name is a refrain echoed by Greg Walker, the director of Hall County Parks and Leisure. Walker and Niekro worked side by side on the development and construction of the county's Field of Dreams, a baseball field adapted for special needs children.

"He was an active participant in the building of the field," said Walker. "He was just a 'regular Joe' at the meetings. He gave his input, shared his ideas. I was impressed with his stick-to-itiveness."

Walker recalled being on site during the field's construction when Niekro would pull up in his car and ask how things were going. Dissatisfied that the field and complex didn't have an electronic scoreboard, Niekro made a couple of well-placed phone calls and got a scoreboard installed.

"He was all about making the baseball experience as real as possible for the kids," said Walker.

On Nov. 12, 2008, Phil Niekro Field at the Hall County Field of Dreams officially opened.

"I can tell you this without question," said Walker. "We honored the right guy in naming it after him."

Like his former teammate and fellow

BLAINE MARABLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Posing with a happy fan, Niekro was the keynote speaker at a charity roast of former Athens, Ga., mayor Upshaw Bentley that raised money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society in September.

Braves Hall of Famer Dale Murphy (Oct. '09 CT) Niekro has followed a 2009 itinerary that took him all across the United States. Here's just a sampling of his schedule.

January found him signing autographs in Atlanta at the Braves Autograph Fest, as one of the speakers sharing reminiscences of broadcasters Pete Van Wieren and Skip Caray at the Braves 400 Fan Club banquet, and then in Bradenton, Fla., participating in former Chicago Bears quarterback Jim McMahon's Swang 'N' Superbowl Bash golf tournament.

Niekro spent a good deal of time in Florida during February. In addition to appearing at the Governor's Baseball Dinner in St. Petersburg on Feb. 24, he was a guest pitching instructor at Braves spring training, brought in specifically to work with his nephew, Lance Niekro (Jan. '09 CT), a former first baseman attempting to return to baseball as a pitcher throwing the mysterious family pitch.

In April, Niekro was in Helen, Ga., to play in a golf tournament benefiting the United Way, and in May he played in a tournament in Hoover, Ala., on the 14th before heading to Columbia, S.C., where he spoke to a private National Baseball Hall of Fame gathering on the 17th.

Niekro was off to Appleton, Wisconsin, in June where he threw out the ceremonial first pitch prior to a Wisconsin Timber Rattlers (Milwaukee Brewers Class A) game and signed autographs for fans. He also made the trek to Cooperstown, N.Y., June 21, to participate in the first Baseball Hall of Fame Classic game, an exhibition of former players that replaced the Hall of Fame Game between major league teams.

Naturally, Niekro was on hand in Atlanta on July 17, to welcome Greg Maddux into the Braves Hall of Fame at the luncheon, and later that night when Maddux's number (31) was retired at the pre-game ceremony at Turner Field. But on July 22, Niekro made his most unusual appearance of the year, signing autographs for U.S. senators and representatives, lobbyists and staffers at the American Meat Institute's (AMI) annual Hot Dog Lunch, held outside the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C.

"The AMI called the Hall of Fame, and they sent word that they were looking for guys to represent Major League Baseball," said Niekro of the unique request. "I was available, so I flew up to Washington and back the same day."

On July 31, Phil and his wife, Nancy, flew to Houston, Tex., for the inaugural "Knuckle Ball... A Pitch for Life." The event, hosted by the Joe Niekro Foundation, was an emotional one for Niekro. Founded by Joe's daughter, Natalie, the foundation raises awareness about aneurysm factors, causes, treatments and research. All funds raised go to support research and treatment of aneurysm patients and families. The event, held at the Houston Astros Minute Maid Park and emceed by Hall of Famer Joe Morgan, raised a whopping $400,000.

"I was proud of my niece. It was a great event," said Niekro, who's already committed to be the emcee of the 2nd Annual Knuckle Ball in Houston next Nov. 13.

In addition to traveling to Cooperstown for events throughout the year, Niekro is also a member of the National Baseball Hall of Fame Board of Directors.

"You're nominated by the standing committee, and if you're selected, you serve three years," he said. "That's when you really find out how the Hall is run!"

The board meets two times a year, during the induction weekend in August and during the off-season.

"It's very businesslike," said Niekro. "There's not a lot of joking around. We're following an agenda and have items to discuss."

Listed with PFP Speakers Bureau, Niekro is a gifted and usually hilarious storyteller.

"He's actually among the best storytellers out there," said Derek Schiller, Braves vice president of marketing. "And his stories are sometimes like his knuckleball pitches - you never quite know where it's going to go, but it always ends up well!"

Schiller said the Braves are fortunate to have a player of Niekro's stature living locally to call on for organizational events.

"Phil is a legend of the game," said Schiller. "He wore the Braves logo on his jersey for 20 years, and I put him alongside the likes of Hank Aaron. He's done so much since retiring by becoming and taking seriously the role of community ambassador. He's one of the greatest ambassadors we could have. We have to be sensitive to his life and his time, but if we could, we'd invite him to every single event. He gets that much of a reaction from fans."

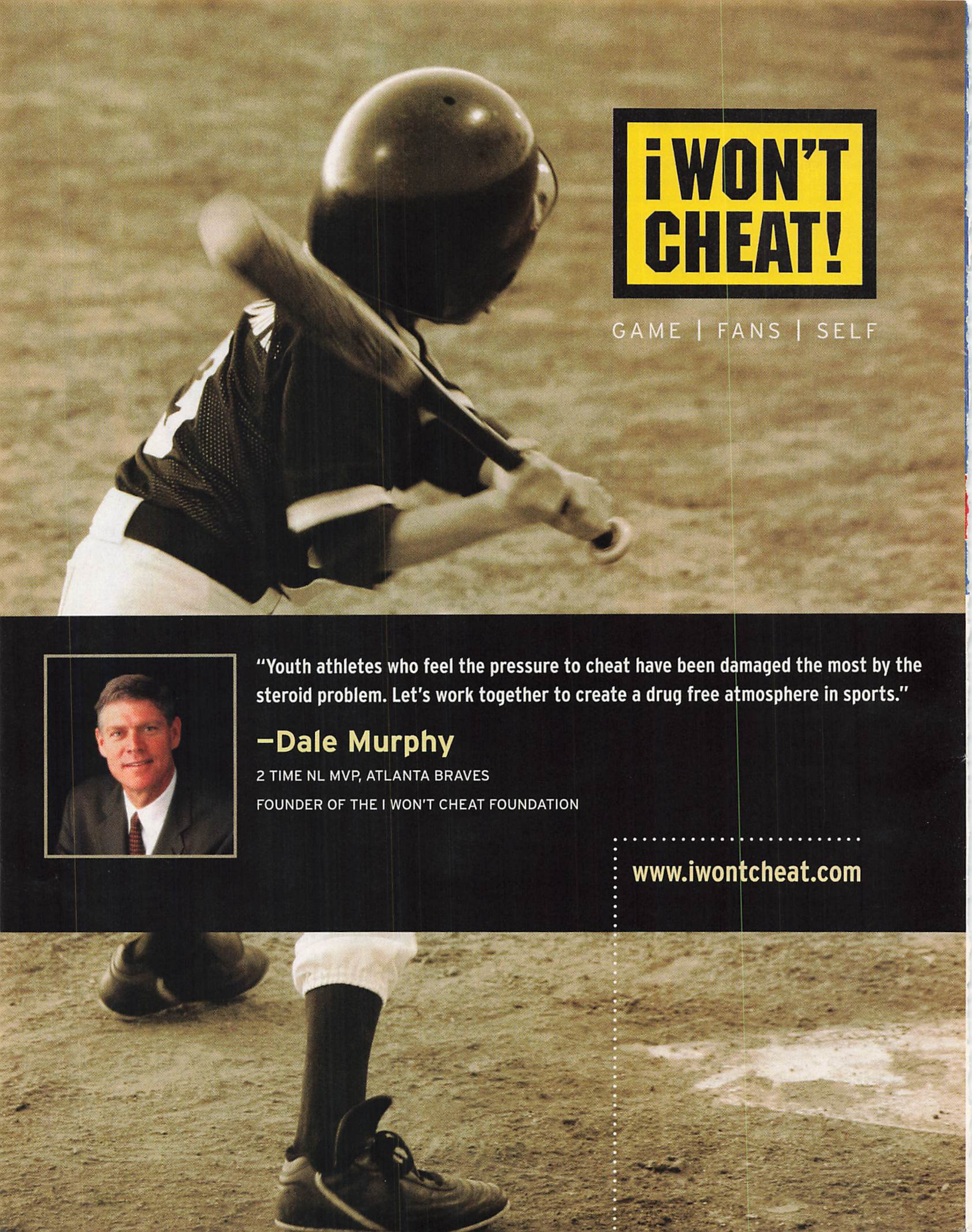
SPECIAL

Niekro greets fellow Hall of Famer Joe Morgan, who served as emcee at the inaugural "Knuckle Ball" in Houston July 31 that raised $400,000 for research and treatment of aneurysms, which claimed the life of Phil's brother, Joe, also a former Braves pitcher.

Whether Niekro is sitting at the boardroom table at the National Baseball Hall of Fame or talking to a young ballplayer at the Field of Dreams bearing his name, he's the same unassuming guy, so low key it's easy to forget he's a baseball legend.

Carolyn Serra, director of the Braves Museum and Hall of Fame, has dealt with Niekro for years on museum business and Hall of Fame events.

"It's great having Phil right here in town," said Serra. "I've called to speak to him about events, but I've also called him with questions about baseball, and he's always sweet as can be. He's a guy who doesn't need the prestige. He's totally down to earth."



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**–Dale Murphy**

2 TIME NL MVP, ATLANTA BRAVES

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## PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

# TOP HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DECADE

**BELIEVE IT OR NOT,** we're nearly at the end of the decade of the 2000s. And while this past decade didn't match the 1990s in Atlanta Braves lore – really, what could? – the last 10 years have had their share of highs, including a Rookie of the Year (Rafael Furcal, 2000), a batting title (Chipper Jones, 2008), and six division flags.

Looking back on the decade, while Atlanta didn't have much playoff success, the Braves still fared better than most teams in baseball, with a healthy share of dramatic plays and record-setting seasons. Here are my top 10 Braves events of the 2000s (next month, I'll focus on the decade's top players):

### ① John Smoltz's 3,000th strikeout:

It was a good decade for Smoltz and milestones. In addition to his 3,000th K, notched on April 22, 2008, Smoltz set a franchise record for saves with 154, and a major league record for post-season wins with 15 (since passed, alas, by Andy Pettitte). Smoltz was a dominant pitcher during the 1990s, but the 2000s proved he was among the best of his generation.

### ② Brian McCann's 2005 playoff homer:

The Baby Braves were the story of 2005, and while Jeff Francoeur captured most of the headlines, it was Brian McCann – fittingly enough, considering his later career – who would strike the most dramatic blow. In his first post-season at-bat, facing the daunting Roger Clemens, McCann went deep and led the Braves to what would end up being their last playoff win.

### ③ Jeff Francoeur's debut:

You don't get rookies like Jeff Francoeur in real life – hometown high school hero homering in his major-league debut. And while the fairy tale did have an ending, for a brief time Francoeur was one of the best stories in baseball.

### ④ Chipper Jones' batting title:

Chipper had always been one of the most perceptive hitters in baseball, and by the late 2000s was able to combine innate skill with a poker player's ability to read pitchers. He lost the 2007 batting title on the season's final day to Matt Holliday, but posted a big enough lead in 2008 that nobody could catch him, and thus added yet another line to his Cooperstown application.

ATLANTA BRAVES

Andres Galarraga's stirring comeback in 2000 included four home runs and 11 RBIs in his first six games and was one of the great feel-good stories in Atlanta Braves history.

### ⑤ Rafael Furcal's unassisted triple play:

On Aug.10, 2003, Furcal pulled off only the 12th (at the time) unassisted triple play in major league history against the St. Louis Cardinals. Incidentally, Furcal was also involved in another landmark play earlier that year, when he, Mark DeRosa and Gary Sheffield became only the second trio of teammates in history to homer successively to lead off a game.

### ⑥ Andres Galarraga's return:

In just one season – 1998 – Andres Galarraga established himself as an integral Braves player. So his diagnosis of non-Hodgkins lymphoma in 1999 rocked the clubhouse. His return in 2000 lifted the entire team at a time when Atlanta – dealing with the John Rocker debacle – desperately needed some good news. In his first game back – storybook moment again – he hit a home run to win the game. And although he left Atlanta at the end of the season, he remains one of the most fondly regarded Braves.

### ⑦ Andruw Jones' 51 homers:

Jones was the architect of most of the stunning non-Otis-Nixon defensive plays of the '90s and '00s. No Braves highlight package will ever be complete without a few shots of Andruw diving to the turf to rob amazed hitters of doubles. In 2005, he added a powerful landmark to his legacy, bashing a franchise-record 51 homers.

### ⑧ 2000 All-Star Game:

Turner Field hosted the first Midsummer Classic of the new millennium (or the last of the old, if you're getting technical). While the National League lost yet again (6-3), the team featured five Braves – the Jones boys, Galarraga (who got the biggest ovation), Tom Glavine and Greg Maddux – along with Bobby Cox in the manager's slot, a fine representation in front of the hometown fans, especially since Chipper hit a home run.

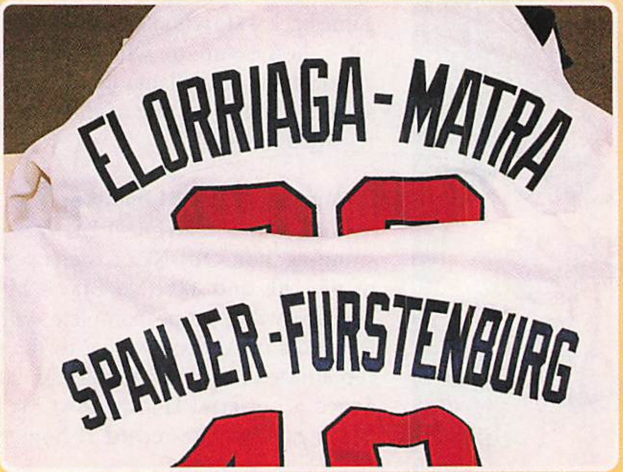
### ⑨ 2001 post-9/11 game:

The Braves played the Mets in the first baseball game in New York after the September 11 attacks. Wearing a FDNY cap, Mike Piazza won the game for the Mets with a late homer. It may be the only loss in history that Braves fans didn't bemoan.

### ⑩ The 2009 Streak:

This one came out of nowhere. The Braves were all but mathematically dead, having lost crucial September games to far inferior teams. And then they began winning... and winning... and winning some more, posting a stunning 15-2 run to vault within two games of the wild card spot. But like a marathoner who started to sprint a mile too early, the Braves collapsed in the final week, watching as the playoff teams scooted just out of reach. Still, the run – bolstered by a '90s-esque combo of shutdown pitching and clutch hitting – gave fans hope that 2010 could be a very good year indeed.

## WANNA BUY A VOWEL?



BILL SETLIFF

**WHEEL OF FORTUNE'S** Vanna White would have felt right at home attending a Danville Braves game this past season. The Danville roster was full of players whose ancestors believed in using as much of the alphabet as possible, with seven players having last names consisting of at least 10 letters!

Leading the pack was first baseman Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg, a native of South Africa who was drafted by the Braves last June in the 16th round. His 18-letter last name - plus the hyphen - led the 14-letter (plus hyphen) last name of catcher Daniel Elorriaga-Matra. Christian Bethancourt, Brett Oberholtzer and Ryohei Shimabukuro tied for third in the letter count race with 11, while Cory Harrilchak and Robert Hefflinger tied for sixth with 10.

Such liberal use of the alphabet not only prevented some names from flowing trippingly from the tongue, it also created a few minor headaches. Consistent spelling for long names is difficult to attain and has to be constantly double-checked, and abbreviations must be used for certain computer programs, particularly regarding statistics and boxscores. Plus, since the Braves put last names on the backs of all minor league player's jerseys, Wilson, the organization's uniform provider, had to go to extra lengths (no pun intended) to ensure the proper look.

According to Wilson representative Bud Horton, the company enters the name on a computer and has to scale the lettering back in terms of width, not overall plate size. The name plate is then hand-cut in order to fit the jersey. The bigger the uniform, the easier it is to fit the plate with a long name.

"We were a little lucky with the one kid (Spanjer-Furstenburg), because he wore a size 50," Horton said. "We've been doing this for more than 100 years, so long names aren't that big of a deal. But it does take a little more time to get it right compared to 'Cox' or 'Jones.'"

If either Spanjer-Furstenburg or Elorriaga-Matra reaches the major leagues, there's a good chance he could achieve history. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, former Brave and current Texas Ranger Jarrod Saltalamacchia has the longest last name in big league annals with 14 letters. And before him, with 13 letters, there was relief pitcher Tim Spooneybarger, whose name now seems almost short in comparison to Spanjer-Furstenburg!

- BILL BALLEW

## COOPERSTOWN FATE?

**FOR MOST PLAYERS**, election to the National Baseball Hall of Fame is "wait-and-see." Just ask Dale Murphy. But for Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine, as well as for Bobby Cox and John Schuerholz, that's not necessarily the case. In fact, Braves fans probably will be making frequent pilgrimages to Cooperstown, N.Y., in the next few years.

Schuerholz, the architect of the Braves' unprecedented run of 14 consecutive division titles, is already eligible for election by the Veterans Committee that is scheduled to meet during the winter meetings, Dec. 7-10, in Indianapolis. Since he is over 65 years old, there is no waiting period, even though he's still active. However, he's not one of the 10 candidates on the ballot, though ironically he is one of the 12 members of the sub-committee charged with voting on executives and pioneers of the game. Schuerholz now will have to wait at least until 2012 for induction, because executives are considered every other year. Actually, that could work out quite well if he's elected in late 2011...

With Cox making the announcement that 2010 will be his final season as manager, he and Schuerholz conceivably - and appropriately - could go in together in 2012.

Managers, unlike players, do not necessarily have to be retired five full seasons before they can be considered. If they are at least 65 years old at retirement, which Cox will be, the

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

# GET PLAYER QUOTES

**SINCE MOST FANS** can't talk directly to the Braves players, they rely on the media to get the inside story and find out how or why something happened during a game.

Sportswriters learn the most effective ways and times to approach ballplayers for quotes and insight. Right before a game starts, players have a lot on their mind and media access is cut off. Mark Bowman, the Braves' beat writer for MLB.com, finds the best time to talk comes right after the clubhouse opens. That happens about three and half hours prior to the first pitch, before the players and coaches get into a routine and start serious preparation for the ballgame.

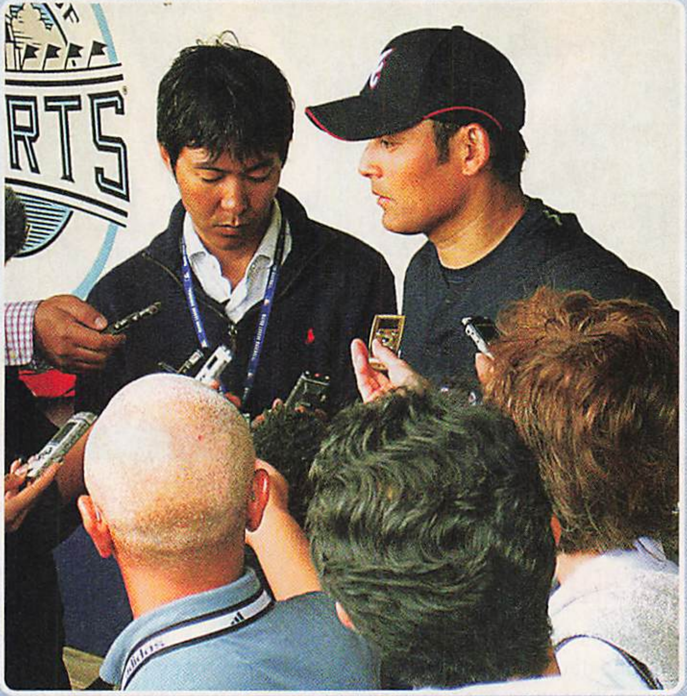
Bowman says he tries not to carry on a structured interview. He finds that the longer he knows the same Braves player, the more things come across as conversational.

"Some of your best answers are when you've been around a guy like Brian McCann or Chipper Jones for some years, you get to know them," said Bowman, who has worked as a beat reporter for nine years. "You approach it, you start to talk about the subject. I'm not saying it's all fun and games. I'm not trying to say it like that. But don't make them feel like they have to provide the perfect answer, nor do you have to provide the perfect question. Just find a way to get the information from them."

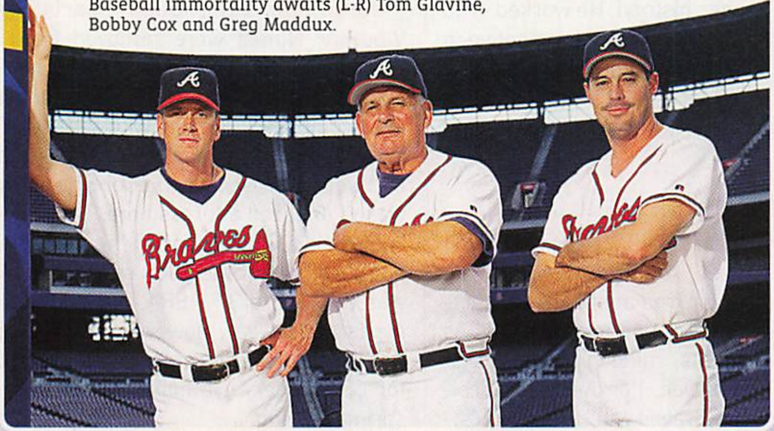
Bowman says it's never easy to talk with players after a tough loss. Post-game interviews get complicated by the fact that some Braves leave the clubhouse earlier than others. Whatever the situation, Bowman explained that there's no specific approach that works with everybody.

"More than anything, you get to know the environment and you get to know the guys in it," he said. "You're going to approach Chipper Jones differently than you approach some of the other guys. It's not because he's Chipper Jones, it's just because they have different personalities."

- STEVE FALL


PATTY RASMUSSEN

Kenshin Kawakami, who'd just joined the Braves from Japan, holds court for a group of reporters interested in his quotes about his new environment last spring training in Florida.


Baseball immortality awaits (L-R) Tom Glavine, Bobby Cox and Greg Maddux.

ATLANTA BRAVES

waiting period is just six months. Therefore, Cox will be eligible for consideration by the Veterans Committee, when the group convenes at the winter meetings in 2011. If elected, he will be inducted in 2012. Since only three managers in history have won more games than him, he should be a first-ballot selection.

Two years later, in 2014, it's likely that Maddux and Glavine will enter the Hall together.

Maddux, who retired after the 2008 season, is a sure first-ballot inductee. Glavine, another first-ballot "lock," also is eligible the same year, according to Hall of Fame spokesman Brad Horn, because his minor league rehab appearances last year don't count against his five-year waiting period.

# START THE COUNTDOWN

MLB PHOTOS / RON VESELY

Derek Jeter accepts the American League Hank Aaron Award from (L-R) Sharp Electronics CEO Daisuke "Doug" Koshima, commissioner Bud Selig and Aaron. NL winner Albert Pujols was not present for the ceremony prior to Game 4 of the World Series at Philadelphia.

**LET THE COUNTDOWN** to pitchers and catchers begin! The Braves pitchers and catchers are scheduled to report to spring training at ESPN Wide World of Sports on Feb. 19 and have their first workout the next day. The remainder of the squad is scheduled to report Feb. 22, with the first full-squad workout Feb. 23.

After two weeks of workouts, the Braves will play a 16-game schedule at 10,000-seat Champion Stadium at Disney World's ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, previously known as Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex. See pages 52-53 for the complete schedule, as well as ticket information. Individual game tickets go on sale Saturday, Jan. 9, at 10 a.m. via Ticketmaster (1-800-745-3000) at ticketmaster.com and the ESPN Wide World of Sports box office. The Braves have held spring training at the Wide World of Sports, located outside Orlando, Fla., since 1998.

## BULLPEN HELP

The Braves signed an experienced bullpen candidate with playoff experience Nov. 6 when they agreed to terms on a one-year minor league contract with **Scott Proctor**, a righthander coming off Tommy John surgery last May 12. Proctor will be at major league spring training as a non-roster invitee.

The 32-year-old Proctor has pitched five seasons in the major leagues, from 2004 to 2008. His 2008 season was cut short due to right elbow tendinitis, and he eventually underwent elbow reconstructive surgery last May that caused him to miss the entire 2009 season.

"As we found in our experience with **Peter Moylan** and **Tim Hudson** in 2009, pitchers typically return to game action in about 12 to 13 months after ligament-replacement surgery," said **Frank Wren**. "We are looking forward to Scott returning to full health and helping our club in 2010."

For his career, Proctor has made 262 appearances (one start) and has posted a 16-10 record with a 4.42 ERA. He made post-season appearances with the Yankees in 2005 and 2006.

Originally drafted by the Dodgers in 1998, Proctor was traded to the Yankees in 2003 and made his major league debut in 2004. He was traded back to the Dodgers during the 2007 season and also pitched there in 2008 before signing with the Florida Marlins as a free agent in January 2009 and being released in October.

In 2006, Proctor led the American League with 83 appearances (second in Yankees history) and led all major league relievers with 102 1/3 innings pitched (also second in Yankees history). He worked in 83 games in 2007, when he split time between the Yankees (52 games) and Dodgers (31).

Proctor is a Florida native and lives in Jensen Beach.

## FREE MEN

**Mike Gonzalez**, **Adam LaRoche**, **Rafael Soriano**, **Garret Anderson** and **Greg Norton** all filed for free agency, as expected. Gonzalez and Soriano are classified as Type A free agents, meaning if they sign elsewhere before Dec. 1 or decline an arbitration offer, the Braves will receive a first-round draft pick and a "sandwich" pick between the first and second round for each. If the signing club has one of the top 15 draft picks, the Braves would get a sandwich pick and a second-round pick.

LaRoche and Anderson are Class B free agents. If they sign elsewhere before Dec. 1 or decline an arbitration offer, the Braves will receive a sandwich pick between the first two rounds.

## ROSTER MOVES

**Jorge Campillo**, **Buddy Carlyle** and **Vladimir Nunez** were removed from the Braves' 40-man roster and became free agents, though the righthanders conceivably could still re-sign with Atlanta. The Braves needed to open roster spots to protect young prospects, though the 40-man wasn't finalized at press time.

Campillo, 31, was one of the most pleasant surprises of the 2008 season when he was 8-7 with a 3.91 ERA in 39 games (25 starts). Last year, however, he made just five relief appearances before having rotator cuff surgery. He hopes to be ready for spring training.

Carlyle, 32, missed much of last year after being diagnosed with diabetes while on the disabled list for a back strain. He had an 8.86 ERA in 16 relief appearances. In 2008, he had a 3.59 ERA in 45 appearances. The 34-year-old Nunez had a 2.16 ERA in 45 appearances at Triple-A Gwinnett but appeared in just one game for Atlanta.

## NEW INSTRUCTORS

The Braves hired **Dave Wallace** as minor league pitching coordinator and **Garey Ingram** as the hitting coach at Double-A Mississippi.

Wallace, who received a two-year contract through the 2011 season, will oversee the progress and development of the Braves' minor league pitchers at all levels. He served as a major league pitching coach with the Dodgers (1995-97), Mets (1999-2000), Red Sox (2003-06) and Astros (2007). He joined the Seattle Mariners in October 2007 and spent two seasons (2008-09) as special assistant to the general manager/minor league pitching coordinator. Wallace began his professional career as a pitcher in the Phillies organization in 1970 and has worked as a major league and minor league coach and/or front office executive since 1981.

Ingram spent the 2009 season as the hitting coach for San Francisco's Double-A Connecticut affiliate after spending the previous seven seasons (2002-08) as a minor league hitting coach in the Dodgers' system. He retired from his 14-year professional playing career in 2002 and began his coaching career that season with the Gulf Coast League Dodgers. His playing career included parts of three major league seasons (1994-95, '97) with the Dodgers. He made history on May 19, 1994, when, as pinch-hitter, he became the 67th major league player to homer in his first plate appearance.

## SHORT HOPS

- **Brian McCann** had a second Lasik eye surgery - an "enhancement" - Oct. 16 to correct the vision problem that forced him to wear glasses last season. McCann hit .195 in April before going on the disabled list with blurred vision. He returned on May 8 with glasses and hit .289 with 19 homers over the final 125 games.

- The Braves signed Mexican shortstop **Amadeo Zazueta**, 23, from the independent Coastal Bend Thunder.

## FRANK WREN
### GENERAL MANAGER

# WE THINK HUDSON WILL RETURN TO DOMINANCE

**AS WE WENT INTO THE OFF-SEASON,** one of our priorities was to get Tim Hudson signed, extended, to add to the depth in our pitching. And we did that with a three-year contract with a club option for a fourth year.

There's no denying, when you look at Tim's career numbers, that prior to his injury, he was one of the most dominant pitchers in baseball. We just saw flashes of that since he's been with us, because he wasn't always able to throw all his pitches, due to his elbow. When he's healthy, he's really good. Based on what we saw in September, we expect to see him return to that form.

We also signed Scott Proctor to a minor league contract. As you fill out a bullpen, you have to take some chances to maximize your depth, and Scott has pitched in some big roles with some good teams. If he bounces back healthy from Tommy John surgery, we think he can help us. He had his surgery about the same time that Peter Moylan had his, only a year later, so sometime in the first two months, we should know what we have.

In October, we had our organizational meetings over four days where we lay out our strategy for the winter and position ourselves to start talking to other clubs. It's some of the most valuable time we spend all year. There's a lot of excitement among our people for next season. The starting pitching proved itself last year and should only get better. If we can make a couple of additions to the bullpen and to the offense, we should be pretty well-rounded for next year.

In talking to the players, it's clear they're excited, too. Some of the younger guys learned things in September going through that playoff drive, and the veterans got re-energized.

> HIRING DAVE WALLACE AS OUR MINOR LEAGUE PITCHING COORDINATOR IS A REAL COUP FOR US.

After the organizational meetings, we had the general managers meeting, where we started conversations to see how we'll be able to configure our team. We were able to spend time with individual clubs we previously identified in discussing their needs and excesses and how we match up for possible deals.

Then we went to the Arizona Fall League, and once we get back, we'll make additional calls about furthering our discussions with the teams we match up with.

We've also begun making contact with some free agents, just expressing our interest. We're not allowed to negotiate yet, but we can express interest. At the winter meetings in December is probably when things will start to happen.

The injury that caused Jason Heyward to leave the Arizona Fall League is not a concern. He just had some spasms and the doctors didn't want him to play for a few weeks while they calmed down, and he'll be fine.

Were excited about the changes in our scouting department. We really appreciate all that Roy Clark did for us for so many years, but we think Tony DeMacio, who came up under Paul (Snyder), has added some strong scouts and put us in position to have a very strong scouting department.

Hiring Dave Wallace as our minor league pitching coordinator is a real coup for us. He's going to make an impact. One of our real key areas is the young pitching we have, and having Dave to lead that area of development means a lot to us.

It looks like Jordan Schafer will get his cast off ahead of schedule, which will enable him to start to prepare a few weeks earlier that we thought. That's what he needs to put him in a strong position going into spring training.

Lance Niekro's decided not to come back next year to continue trying to develop as a knuckleball pitcher. We were open to him continuing to try, but he felt he wasn't progressing at the rate he'd like.

# HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

SPECIAL

This impressive carving, complete with the stylized feather and screaming Indian logos, was one of five finalists in the Braves' Pumpkin Carving Contest at Halloween.

**FANS HAVE UNTIL DEC. 15** to purchase a special "Holiday 6-Game Gift Pack" of tickets that includes Opening Day and the Fourth of July Celebration (July 3). Turner Field is sure to be packed for Opening Day, Monday, April 5, since the Braves will be hosting the Cubs. And the Fourth of July Celebration, which falls on Saturday (July 3) against the Marlins, traditionally is one of the biggest dates of the season. This is the first opportunity to buy seats for those dates.

The "Holiday 6-Game Gift Pack" includes two tickets to six games for as low as $130 (27 percent off the gate price) and includes a replica Braves cap, a holiday card and Braves wrapping paper and gift box. This offer is available at Braves.com/holidays or by calling (404) 577-9100. The other games included are:

May 1 vs. Houston, May 18 vs. Mets, June 18 vs. Kansas City, and a June 4 meeting between the Triple-A Gwinnett Braves and the Scranton Yankees at Gwinnett Stadium.

The Braves held a Pumpkin Carving Contest and received many creative entries. A panel of judges narrowed the entries to five finalists, and the winner was selected by online vote to receive a pair of tickets to any 2010 Braves home game. Fans could even get assistance in their carvings by downloading free Braves stencils from braves.com.

## WINTER FUN

The Braves 400 Fan Club will hold its annual winter banquet, the **Eddie Glennon** Gameboree, Saturday, Feb. 13, and as usual, it is open to all fans. The event will be at the Marriott Perimeter Center with the theme of "Great Atlanta Braves Pitching Rotations." The evening begins with a reception and silent auction at 7:30 p.m., followed by dinner and the program at 7 p.m. Several of the Braves' top prospects always are among the special guests, since they receive awards. Tickets are $60 each for club members (prior to Jan. 6/$65 after) and $65 each for non-members. For information, call (770) 416-4539 or visitbraves400.org.

## AND THE BANDS PLAYED ON

The Braves, in partnership with WSB-TV's "Battle of the Bands," have launched a series of High School Band Nights for the 2010 season to provide the best high school marching bands in the state with the opportunity to perform at a Braves home game and raise funds for their programs. The grand prize winner of WSB-TV's "Battle of the Bands" contest, currently underway at WSBTV.com, will receive free tickets for members of their band and the opportunity to perform at one of the Braves 2010 High School Band Nights.

High school bands interested in performing at a Braves home game in the coming season can go to braves.com/highschoolbands to find out more and secure a performance date as soon as possible, since only one band will be showcased per game and slots will be filled on a first-come basis.

In order to help high school bands raise money, the Braves are offering participating organizations a discount of up to 50 percent on group tickets for their high school's performance night, and allow the groups to re-sell those tickets at full face value, keeping the net proceeds.

The High School Band Nights dates, all on Tuesdays, are: April 20 (Phillies), May 18 (Mets), June 1 (Phillies), June 15 (Tampa Bay Rays), June 29 (Nationals), July 20 (Padres), Aug. 3 (Mets), Aug. 17 ( Nationals), Aug. 31 (Mets), Sept. 14 (Nationals), Sept. 28 (Marlins).

## GWINNETT LOSES GM

**Bruce Baldwin**, who served as a general manager in the Atlanta organization since 1983, announced he will step down from his post with the Gwinnett Braves but will remain associated with the club as a consultant. Baldwin's career started with the Pulaski Braves in 1982 before he took over the Double-A team in Savannah and Greenville in 1983-84 and the Richmond Braves in 1985. In addition to overseeing the move of Savannah to Greenville and Richmond to Gwinnett, Baldwin also headed the construction of three ballparks - Greenville Municipal Stadium, The Diamond in Richmond, and Gwinnett Stadium.

Baldwin has received many baseball awards, including Baseball America's Freitas Award (symbolic of best overall run franchise), Minor League Baseball's **Larry MacPhail** Promotional Award (recognizing him for many creative promotional contributions that have been adopted as standards in the industry), the Southern League Executive of the Year, the International League Executive of the Year, Sporting

News Minor League Executive of the Year, and the **John H. Johnson** President's Award (twice) as an industry leader.

## TOYS FOR TOURS

Several promotions are scheduled at the Braves Museum & Hall of Fame during the off-season. A Toy for a Tour returns from Dec. 1-22. For three weeks, children 13 and under will receive a free tour of Turner Field for donating a free, unwrapped toy to the Braves Foundation. The foundation will donate all collected toys to children in need during the holiday season.

To celebrate the start of 2010, two visitors can tour the museum and Turner Field for less than the price of one during January. The regular adult admission is $12, but during January 2010, two adult admissions are only $10.

In order to promote the celebration of Black History Month in February, children 13 and under who read a book or an article about the Negro Leagues or the history of African Americans in professional baseball will receive a complimentary tour of Turner Field. Children can bring the book or article to the Braves museum entrance to receive free admission.

## BALLS & STRIKES

- **Roy Clark**, who was the Braves' director of scouting for 11 years, left the team to become an assistant general manager with the Washington Nationals. He was replaced by scout **Tony DeMacio**, who received a two-year contract. See page 35 for more on DeMacio.

- **Brian McCann** and his wife, **Ashley**, hosted their first Rally Celebrity Softball Game Nov. 13 at **Russ Chandler** Stadium on the Georgia Tech campus. **Chipper Jones** and his wife, **Sharon**, and Jet Sports Management were co-sponsors. McCann and Chipper captained the two teams. Proceeds benefited the Rally Foundation for Childhood Cancer Research.

- **Jordan Schafer** was on hand Oct. 23 for the preview party at Mac and Bones Golf and Grill, a grill and miniature golf course in Pearl, Miss., home of the Mississippi Braves.

## BOBBY COX

MANAGER

# HEYWARD WILL BE GIVEN A CHANCE TO EARN A JOB

**I'M REALLY DELIGHTED** to have Tim Hudson back. Huddy is the type of veteran you want, a leader and one of the most well-liked guys on our team. He pitched really strong when he came back from Tommy John surgery in September. He was probably not 100 percent, maybe about 90 percent, but he showed he could pitch, and we know that other 10 percent will be back.

This gives us six solid starters, and it's an enviable position. There are plenty of teams who would love to have what we've got. Having six starters gives Frank Wren the flexibility he needs in order to continue to build our team.

The off-season began with a series of meetings, and by the time this column is read, we'll be heading to the winter meetings. This year they're held in Indianapolis (Dec. 7-10). I go to the meetings, and so do Frank, John Schuerholz, Bruce Manno (assistant GM), a lot of our scouts and special assistants. All the minor league people are there, too.

The organizational meetings we've had up to this point are critically important in lining up the priorities at every level of the organization. Everyone has input. I've met with Frank, Terry McGuirk (CEO) and John Schuerholz. We've met with scouts and minor league directors. The coaches have all met. And we talk all the time.

Roger McDowell and Dave Wallace (minor league pitching coordinator) are going to the Arizona Fall League for a few days and will report on what they've seen. That way we're all on the same page as we head to the winter meetings.

Among our priorities are decisions about our free agents. The big names are Rafael Soriano, Mike Gonzalez and Adam LaRoche. We discuss our needs and how these guys, for example, would fill them. But there are other guys who have filed for free agency. We look at all of them.

> I'M ALREADY LOOKING AHEAD TO NEXT YEAR, MY FINAL SEASON MANAGING, AND I'M EXCITED ABOUT IT.

It's not as easy to put deals together as it looks. In fact, with all the factors that have to be considered, it's amazing these deals get done! It's a tough job. Frank did everything he needed to do last year, and I have confidence he and his guys will do it again this winter.

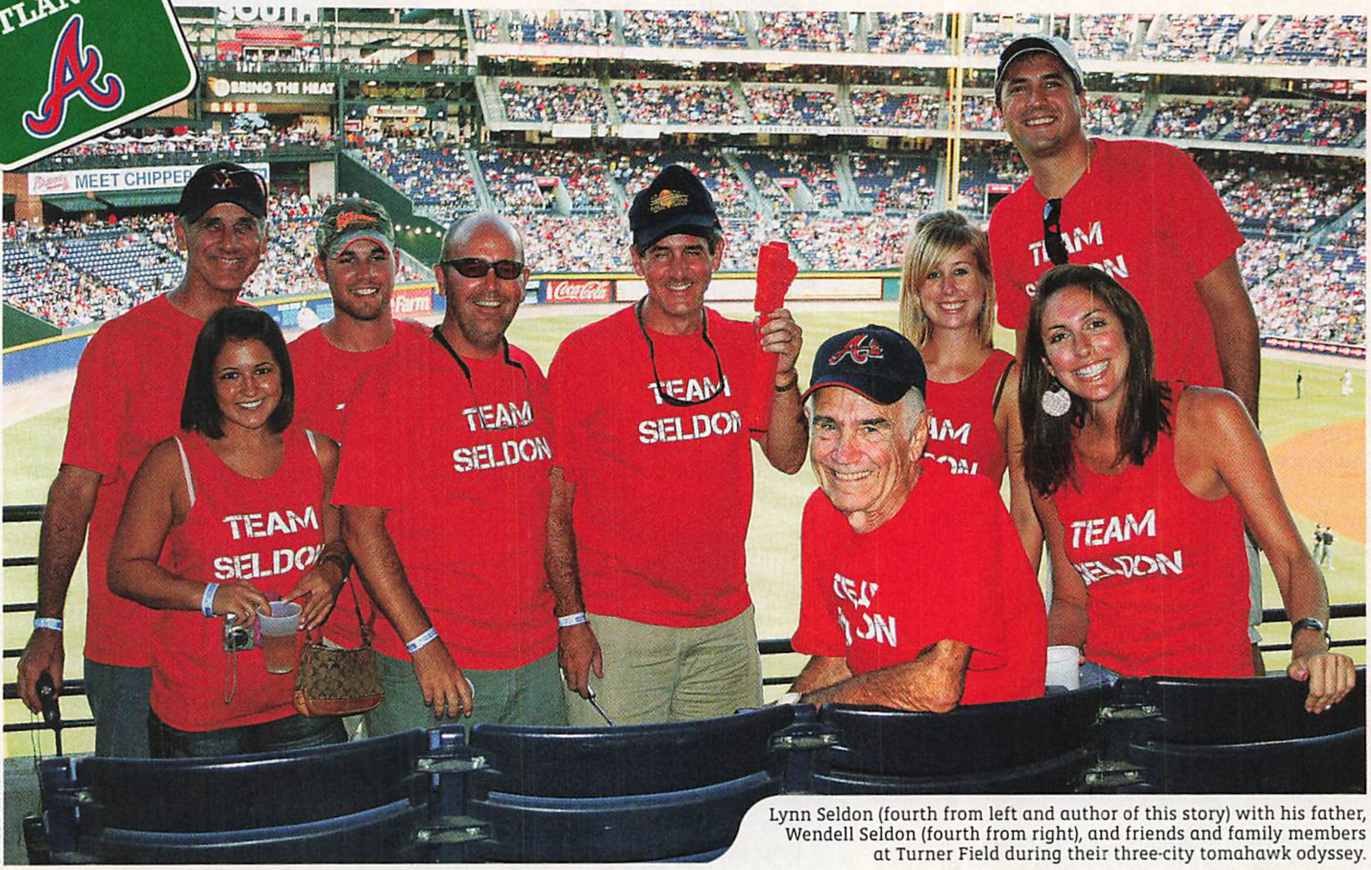
Sometimes it's difficult to put together this column in the off-season because so many things can change before the next issue. I can't say too much, because I don't know how things will work out, but I can say that we feel like we have the makings of a solid team for the 2010 season, especially with a lot of our young talented prospects emerging, like Tommy Hanson did in 2009.

Even though he was injured and was unable to play during the Arizona Fall League, Jason Heyward is the top player in our minor league system, and he'll be given every chance to compete for a job at spring training.

I'm enjoying some quiet time, relaxing with my family. We'll have all our family in for the Christmas holidays. We spend the time at the farm in Adairsville (Ga.), and in January, my wife, Pam, and I take an annual trip to Mexico with our good friends.

This was an exciting season to look back on. There were a lot of encouraging signs, especially in our starting pitching and with the surge the team put together toward the end. I'm already looking ahead to next year, my final season managing, and I'm excited about it.

I really believe we have some of the best fans in baseball, and ChopTalk readers are especially good Braves fans. On behalf of all our players and coaches, I wish you all very happy holidays!



CARLOS CALDERON

Lynn Seldon (fourth from left and author of this story) with his father, Wendell Seldon (fourth from right), and friends and family members at Turner Field during their three-city tomahawk odyssey.

## From Rome To Atlanta To Gwinnett, Fans Connect The Tomahawks For A Special Birthday Extravaganza

# ROAD TRIP

BY LYNN SELDON

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

The following article was written by Lynn Seldon, a freelance travel writer based in Oak Island, N. Carolina. He was named the 2006 Travel Writer of the Year by the Southeast Tourism Society.

I grew up a huge baseball fan in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, thanks to my father, Wendell Seldon, and two older brothers, Greg and Steve, who were passionate about America's pastime and passed it on to me, one pitch at a time (including quite a few curves, if I recall correctly).

Due to our location near Baltimore, we were all Orioles fans back when the "Orioles Way" of playing baseball led to pennants and World Series championships in the late 1960s, '70s and early '80s.

When my parents moved to Richmond, Virginia, and I followed after a far-flung stint in the Army, my dad and I bought season tickets to the Richmond Braves (then the long-time Triple-A affiliate of the Atlanta Braves). We enjoyed many great seasons and players from our seats behind the third base dugout, as the likes of Chipper Jones, Javy Lopez, Ryan Klesko and many more passed through Richmond on their way to success in Atlanta.

With my father's 80th birthday approaching, my family came up with the unique idea of taking him to Georgia in August to attend three Braves games in three days - the Rome Braves, the Atlanta Braves, and the Gwinnett Braves (who replaced the Richmond Braves as Atlanta's Triple-A club for the 2009 season).

The trip evolved to include all three sons, grandchildren Megan, Gregory and Abbey, and several extended family members who had grown to love my father like Braves fans love Bobby Cox. Some people couldn't make all three stops, but we had nine people at most games.

To say that the trip was a hit would be underestimating the smiles, the laughs, the memories (including more than 500 pictures), and the victories (the Braves won every game!).

It started in Rome (romebraves.com) on Aug. 21, where we enjoyed premium Yacht Club food, beer, and seating (all at a great price). An interview of my dad played on the huge outfield screen, and the Rome Braves staff and the locals couldn't have treated us better. A downpour between the first and second games of a doubleheader couldn't dampen our "opening night" enjoyment, even though the second game was rained out.

After a day exploring busy downtown Atlanta on Aug. 22, Saturday night's game at Turner Field (braves.com) will certainly be an evening my dad and everyone else in our group will remember. Great all-you-can-eat-and-drink seats down the left-field line, a gift bag from the Braves, a hilarious interview with "Mr. Double Talk," and birthday greetings on the big screen made for a special night for all involved (and another Braves' win didn't hurt). By the final out of a 4-3 victory over Florida, everyone in our seating area knew our group in the red t-shirts and wished my father a hardy happy birthday.

A Sunday afternoon game Aug. 23 at the new Gwinnett (County) Stadium (gwinnettbraves.com) included a rehab start by Tim Hudson, a tour of the stadium (which is a serious improvement over Richmond's aging Diamond), tasty food, and yet another Braves win. It was also a cathartic experience for my father and me, in that it was great to see the Triple-A Braves in a sparkling new gem of a ballpark (ironically, we found out that even the general manager of the Richmond Braves, Bruce Baldwin, moved with the club to suburban Atlanta).

Gwinnett Stadium's parking lot proved to be a place of sad goodbyes as we went our separate ways after a very special Braves 80th birthday celebration (my father's actual birthday is Oct. 5, but that doesn't jive well with the baseball schedule). Three Braves victories were icing on the cake of this special weekend.

Baseball fan or not, everyone I tell about the trip says they'd love to do something similar for a loved one. I immediately tell them that the Braves staff at all three ballparks made it easy to plan. We bought the tickets (with their advice) and they did all the rest - upon learning of our reason for being there, every staff member went out of their way to make my father's birthday celebration special.

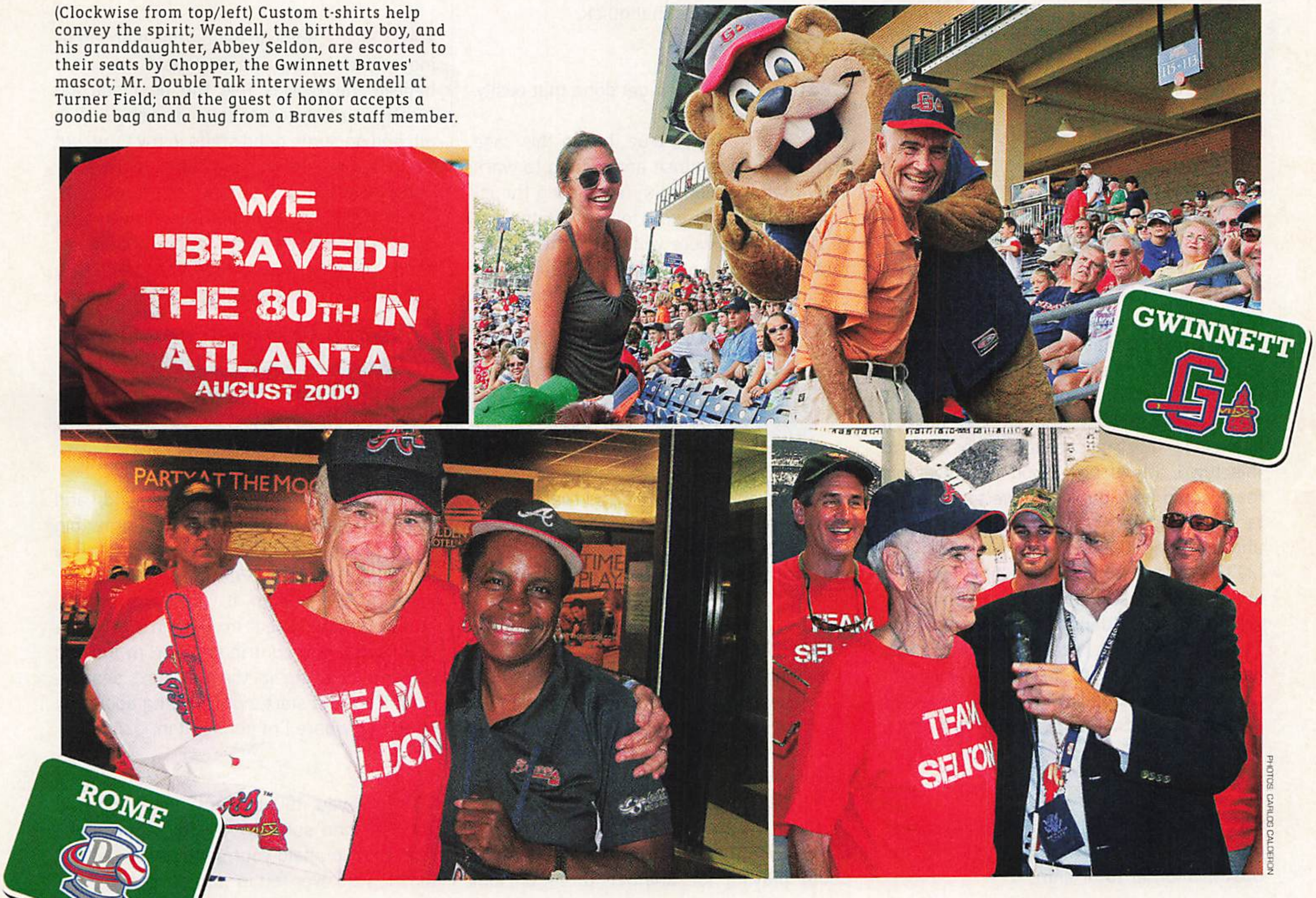
Anyone else could do the same thing for any Braves celebration (though it may take some serious schedule analysis to make the timing work).

Another option that we may explore for a future Braves get-together would be to add visits to other out-of-state "baby" Braves minor league affiliates, including the Double-A Mississippi Braves (mississippibraves.com) located in Pearl, Miss. (near Jackson); the advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach Pelicans (myrtlebeachpelicans.com) on the South Carolina coast; the advanced rookie-level Danville Braves (dbraves.com) in southern Virginia; and the rookie Gulf Coast League Braves who play in Orlando (at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, where the big Braves hold spring training).

And for an extra-special Braves trip to remember, how about including the rookie Dominican Summer League Braves in the Dominican Republic town of San Pedro de Macoris (a baseball-rich location long-known as the "Cradle of Shortstops") or even venture to the Braves' new European Academy at Tenerife in the Canary Islands?

Connecting the Tomahawks on the map is a great way to enjoy a special celebration of any kind, not to mention a family vacation.

(Clockwise from top/left) Custom t-shirts help convey the spirit; Wendell, the birthday boy, and his granddaughter, Abbey Seldon, are escorted to their seats by Chopper, the Gwinnett Braves' mascot; Mr. Double Talk interviews Wendell at Turner Field; and the guest of honor accepts a goodie bag and a hug from a Braves staff member.



PHOTOS: CARLOS CALDERON

# PLAYING PEPPER

# TIM HUDSON

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Hudson, who was 2-1 with a 3.61 ERA in September after returning from elbow surgery, signed a new three-year contract with an option for a fourth season.

INTERVIEW BY
PATTY RASMUSSEN

**CHOPTALK:** Why was it so important for you to remain in Atlanta?

**TIM HUDSON:** Staying in Atlanta was very important to me and my family. I've had a great time playing here these last five years, and it's a blessing to me to have that opportunity to be extended out. I'm close to my home, where I grew up (Phenix City, Ala.), and I believe the Braves have a chance to bring a championship back to this town. That's how good I believe this team could be. I think we (the team) got a taste of that feeling and that playoff atmosphere during the last few weeks of the (2009) season, and it was exciting. I wanted to be a part of it. In terms of my family, you know my kids (daughters Kennedie and Tess and son Kade) are all in school here, and we didn't want to have to split up. If I had to go play somewhere else, that would be tough to do. So staying in Atlanta was my top priority.

**CT:** A lot was made about your willingness to give a "hometown discount" to the Braves in order to re-sign.

**HUDSON:** Yeah, who knows what could have happened if I went out on the market in this economy. I just knew that we wanted to keep our family here. It was important to us. When we first began negotiating, Frank Wren and the Braves came with a fair, good offer that made me believe they wanted to keep me. I was excited to see that, because I knew they were serious about getting a deal done and getting it done quickly. Because of doctors' appointments and MRIs, the signing has taken longer than the actual negotiations! Frank and I talked for the first time the day (wife) Kim and I were driving to the Keys for our 10th wedding anniversary trip. It was a Tuesday (Oct. 21), and by the time we were driving home the following Sunday, it was pretty much agreed upon. It was that quick.

**CT:** Deals don't often get done that easily.

**HUDSON:** That's true, but in this case, both sides were close and willing to work. They made a good faith offer, even though I'd only pitched a month for them in the past year, and then were willing to extend it for three years, with an option for a fourth year. I appreciate the confidence they have in me, and it makes me want to do all I can to over-deliver on the contract! There's mutual respect between me and Frank. We talked during the season, but he never pushed, even though I'm sure there were questions about my health. And when I did pitch, they never made me feel like I was trying out for the team. They made me feel good about the recovery process. They didn't want to push me. My job was just to show them I could pitch and be healthy, and they are convinced of that. So am I.

> "I APPRECIATE THE CONFIDENCE THEY HAVE IN ME, AND IT MAKES ME WANT TO DO ALL I CAN TO OVER-DELIVER ON THE CONTRACT!"

**CT:** Do you think you would feel differently about playing for another three or four years if you had to go somewhere other than Atlanta?

**HUDSON:** Playing in Atlanta is definitely going to make it easier on me. Right now, our family lives in Peachtree City, but even when we move to our house in Auburn (Ala.), we'll only be one and a half hours away. I've never had to be away from my family. In my whole 10-year career, I've had them with me, and not every guy can say that. But I was telling Kim the other night, the only thing that would have made me look at another club's offer and being away from our family would be if I could win a championship. The fact is we have just as good a shot here in Atlanta as anywhere. I really believe that.

**CT:** Looking ahead to the 2010 season, what are you most excited about?

**HUDSON:** You win ballgames with pitching and defense, and this past season, I believe the Braves had the best starting rotation in major league baseball. I've pitched on some good staffs in my time, but the five guys we put out there night after night were about the best I've played with. Tommy Hanson, that guy's gonna win a Cy Young one of these days, and probably J.J. (Jair Jurrjens), too. Javier Vazquez had a career year and pitched as well as anyone in baseball. Derek Lowe was solid, and Kenshin Kawakami turned in some big game performances. That guy beat Roy Halladay, 1-0, in one of the best performances of the season. It was fun to watch, but even better to get to come in during the last month and contribute. So, I'm looking forward to being in the mix next season, right from the start, not worrying about my health or where I'm gonna fit in.

**CT:** Are you 100 percent now? You had Tommy John surgery on your elbow, but I read that you said your shoulder feels better than it's ever felt in your career.

**HUDSON:** Yeah, that's one of the benefits of Tommy John rehab. You exercise your shoulder until you're blue in the face! Coming back from the elbow surgery, I realized that my shoulder program probably wasn't as good as it could have been. I'm not a spring chicken anymore (34 years old), so now when I work out, the shoulder exercises are the first thing I do.

**CT:** Bobby Cox called you a team leader. Do you feel that way, or do you still see yourself as the fun-loving kid you were back in Oakland? What's it like being viewed as a veteran on this team?

**HUDSON:** As of late, I'd say I'm getting into that leadership role. I really cherish that. I played with some great veterans back in Oakland when I was coming up and even some great veterans here in Atlanta when I came over. It meant a lot when those guys reached out and helped you and didn't just ride you. I don't know everything about the game, but I know I can offer advice to the younger players if I see there's an issue or I know something that helped me. I just want to be a good teammate and build great team chemistry. We had that in Oakland, and it's something a GM can't pay for - great team chemistry. I saw that type of atmosphere at the end of last season, where you had a group of guys who wanted to win, who cared for each other, cheered for each other.

**CT:** In your opinion, who was the catalyst for the 2009 Braves? People have mentioned Nate McLouth, Martin Prado and Tommy Hanson.

**HUDSON:** I'd say it was a combination or an accumulation of those guys, but if I was going to put my finger on one, it would be Martin Prado who brought so much to the top of the lineup. Night after night, he was out there hitting. I've thought for a long time that he was a solid, everyday major league second baseman, and he proved that. He set the table at the top of the lineup, he worked really hard every single day and wanted to win. Tommy Hanson was incredible from Day 1, and it's going to be great to have the pieces that we had in the second half of the season from the beginning next year.

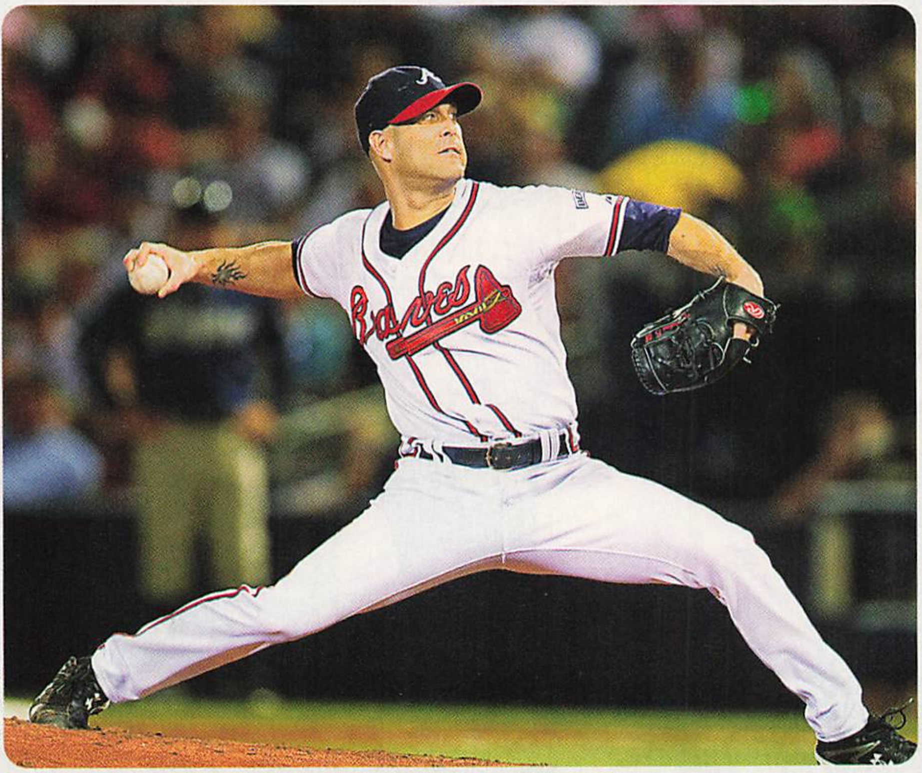
**CT:** What pieces would you like to see Frank Wren plug into the existing team?

**HUDSON:** I'm not sure what pieces are out there. I know there's a spot or two in the bullpen they'd probably like to fill. One of the interesting possibilities that's out there is Billy Wagner, who I've heard has always wanted to play in Atlanta. You can upgrade a team in a lot of different ways, and I know Frank's out there looking. But the nucleus of our club, regardless of whether they make any moves, is good right now. Our starting pitcher will go deeper into games, and I don't think you'll see many, if any, 8-0 ballgames in the fourth inning next season.

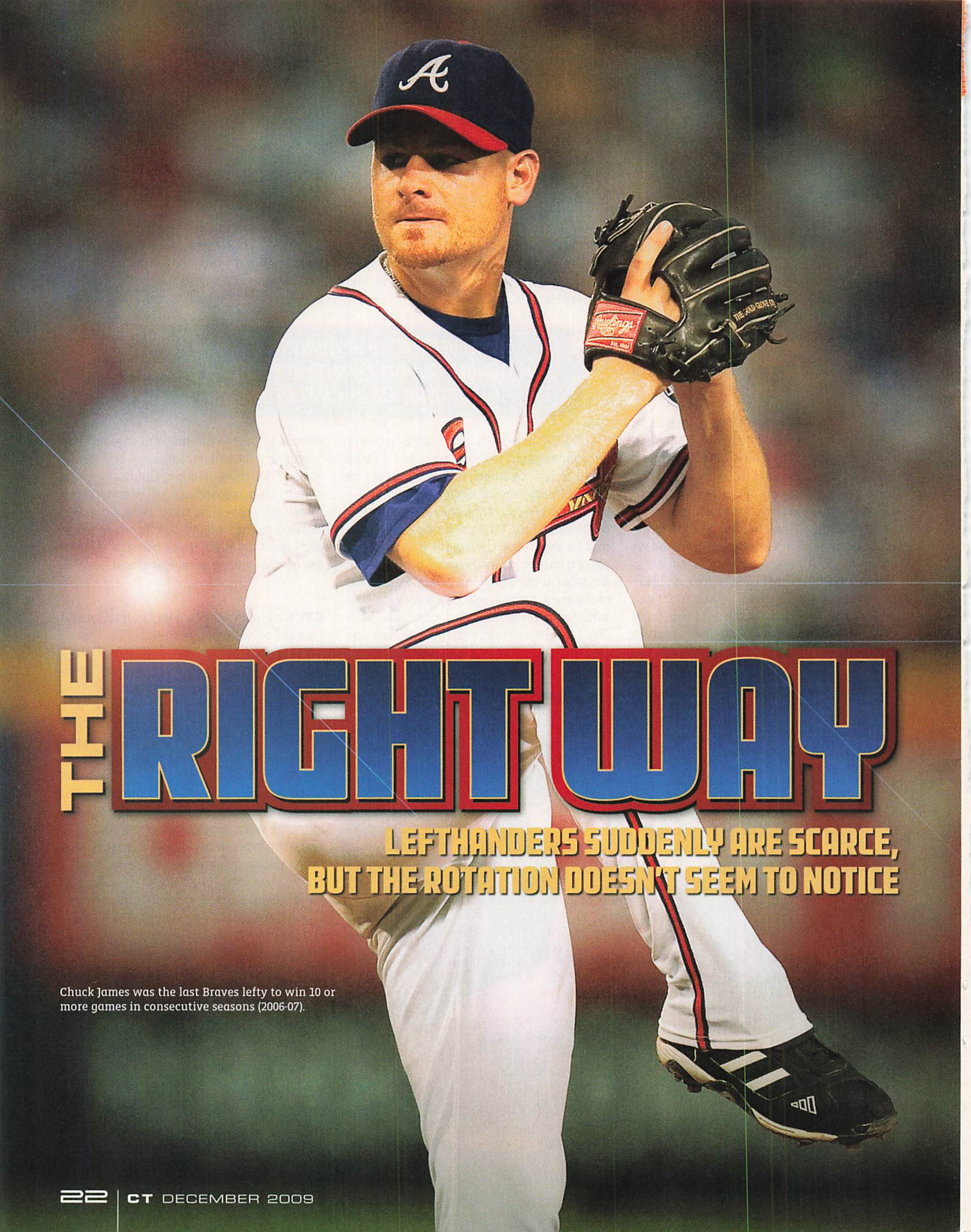
> "I'VE NEVER HAD TO BE AWAY FROM MY FAMILY. IN MY WHOLE 10-YEAR CAREER, I'VE HAD THEM WITH ME, AND NOT EVERY GUY CAN SAY THAT."

**CT:** Staying in Atlanta benefits the Hudson Family Foundation, too, right?

**HUDSON:** Absolutely. We've been blessed with so many opportunities on and off the field, and our Foundation got off to a good start this year. Staying in Atlanta just keeps the momentum up. We've been happy to work with Children's Healthcare of Atlanta and Make A Wish Foundation of Alabama and Georgia since we came to Atlanta, but starting our own foundation was important to us. We want to help kids locally. We try to keep it all local, here in Georgia or where I'm from in Alabama, and we're able to do that. There are a lot of great charities out there, but it's been a blessing for us to see someone in need and to be able to make a difference in someone's life. Sometimes we'll just have a conversation or give a hug, but that's what that person needed. Kim can strike up a friendship with anyone. She calls it "selfish giving," because what we're getting in return for whatever we do is just as fulfilling. We're still just getting started, but we're putting our fingerprint on it.


ATLANTA BRAVES

A 20-game winner in 2000 with Oakland, Hudson is 148-78 for his career, a .655 winning percentage that ranks 23rd all-time.



# THE RIGHT WAY

## LEFTHANDERS SUDDENLY ARE SCARCE, BUT THE ROTATION DOESN'T SEEM TO NOTICE

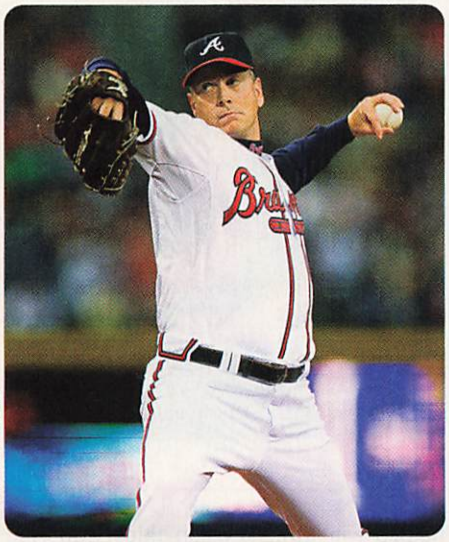
Chuck James was the last Braves lefty to win 10 or more games in consecutive seasons (2006-07).

BY JON COOPER

**ON SEPT. 29, 2006**, 24-year-old rookie lefty Chuck James out-pitched Houston's powerful 300-win righthander Roger Clemens in front of 31,034 fans at Turner Field in a 4-1 Braves victory.

The win was James' 11th of the season, and it seemingly helped pave his path to becoming "the next Tom Glavine." The Braves also had young lefty Horacio Ramirez in the rotation and veteran lefthander Mike Hampton, who both were expected back to balance a projected 2007 staff anchored by John Smoltz and Tim Hudson.

So much for the best-laid plans.



PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES

James matched his '06 win total in 2007, but he lacked the same consistency, then was hampered by a shoulder injury and went 2-5 with a 9.10 ERA in 2008. He hasn't pitched in the majors since Aug. 6, 2008, though he is hot on the comeback trail as a free agent after being non-tendered by the Braves a year ago.

The Braves have no shortage of starting pitchers, however, they haven't had a consistently productive southpaw for a full season since James was healthy. It's been a tough slot to fill.

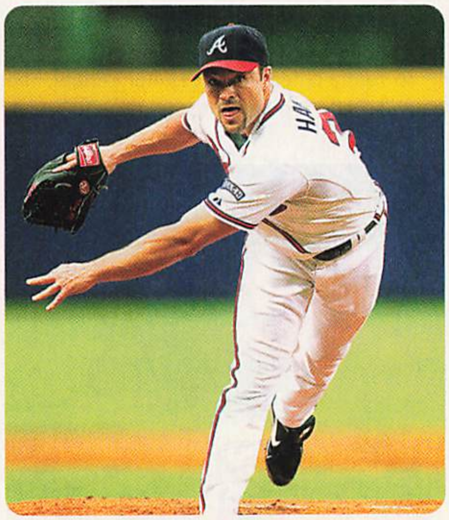
Ramirez, who won 12 games as a Braves starter in 2003 and 11 in '05, was traded to Seattle in December 2007 for Rafael Soriano and is in his second stint with Kansas City. Hampton sat all of 2007 and half of 2008, made 13 starts for the Braves in the second half of '08, and then signed with Houston for the 2009 season. He made 21 starts with the Astros, hurt his shoulder, and is expected to miss all of 2010.

Not even future Hall of Famer Glavine could reverse the lefty curse. Instead of leading the Braves to one more run at the playoffs in 2008, he suffered elbow problems that forced him into his first career trip to the disabled list. He was shelved three times, eventually shutting down in late August because of a torn flexor tendon. He underwent surgery, but just as he appeared set to return early last June, the Braves released him at age 43.

Jo-Jo Reyes made an ill-fated run at claiming a spot in the rotation last year but lasted just five starts - the only five starts for the Braves by a lefty in 2009. Reyes, however, was ineffective and then injured his hamstring.

Since Reyes' last start on May 20, and it's been all righties for Atlanta ever since. The result has been positive, to say the least.

Jo-Jo Reyes (R) made the only five starts by a lefty on the Braves' staff in 2009, Tom Glavine (L) won his last game on May 20, 2008, and Mike Hampton (below) bolted to Houston via free agency in '09, only to wind up having more surgery that will cause him to miss all of 2010.



Frank Wren insists it's nothing personal. He'd love to have a southpaw... a good one.

"I think any time you can have left-handed starting pitching, it's probably a bit of an advantage, but you'd rather have quality starting pitching, and I think we've had that," said Wren.

"In our division, there are some teams that probably have a little tougher time against lefties because of their big left-handed hitters. But at the same time, I feel like quality is more important than which arm they throw with."

"You need to see them once in a while. It's different," Bobby Cox said about left-handers in the rotation. "Obviously, the more you see them, the more you feel good about trying to hit them. It's always good to have one, but if you have five good [righties], what's wrong with that?"

It's difficult to find fault with the rotation of Derek Lowe, Jair Jurrjens, Javier Vazquez, Tim Hudson and Tommy Hanson. And Kenshin Kawakami pitched better than his record indicates before being moved to the bullpen when Hudson returned from a year of recovering from surgery.

Atlanta's rotation led the majors with 99 quality starts (6 or more innings while allowing 3 or fewer earned runs) and ranked in the top 10 in nearly every major stat department for starting pitchers.

Atlanta's rotation was not alone in its right-handed dominance. The St. Louis Cardinals won the NL Central with a rotation that ranked second in the National League in shutouts and complete games yet never started a lefty.

On the other hand, the NL champion Phillies had as many as four lefties in their rotation, and the NL West champion Dodgers and wild card contender San Francisco also relied heavily on lefties. The AL champion Yankees posted the majors' best record, thanks in part to the 1-2 lefty punch of CC Sabathia and Andy Pettitte.

To have lefties, or not to have lefties: That is the question. There doesn't seem to be a definitive answer.

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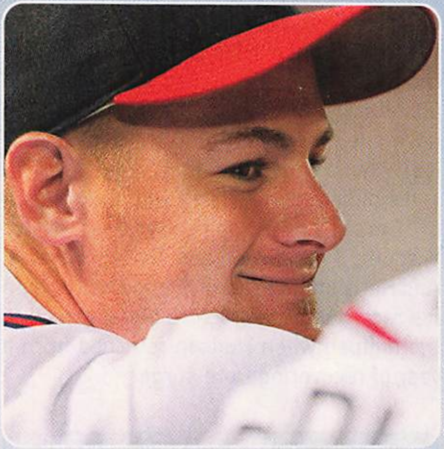
# JAMES PLANS COMEBACK



ATLANTA BRAVES

**CHUCK JAMES**, who only turned 28 last month, isn't ready to give up on his baseball dream just yet.

The last Braves lefthander to record 10 wins in back-to-back seasons (11 in both 2006 and 2007), James has been out of baseball since being released by the Braves last December.

He has since undergone major shoulder surgery to repair a torn rotator cuff and torn labrum, and continues extensive rehab.

"It's feeling pretty good," said James, who said he feels back to about 90 percent of where he was prior to his injuries. "I haven't thrown in front of a radar gun to see what kind of velocity we're working with, but the ball's coming out great, the control is great."

The 20th-round pick of the Braves in the 2002 draft had hoped to audition in front of scouts in July, but now feels certain he'll be ready to throw bullpens in January.

"When the Braves first released me, I had a couple of teams that were interested," he recalled. "But once everybody found out the extent of the surgery, everybody kind of said, 'Look, we're still interested, but we want to wait until you're ready to throw bullpens and then we'll come out and look.' As far as that goes, my agent will set everything up around January."

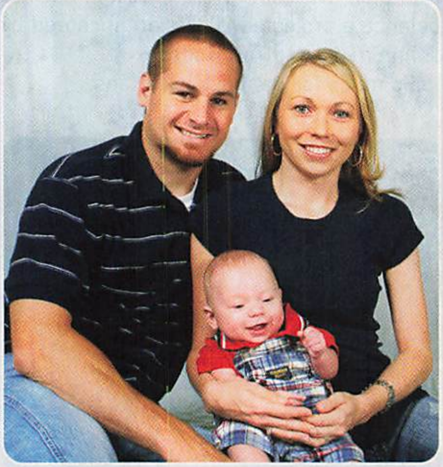
Until then, James, who lives in suburban Atlanta (Douglasville), with his wife, Julie, and six-month-old son, Tucker, will continue to rehab Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Tuesdays and Thursdays are dedicated to his other passion, taking care of Tucker while Julie works.

He admits the rehab process has been long and frustrating, but he remains optimistic.

"It's tough. We get no paycheck. I really haven't been able to work. I have to go around to so many different places (for rehab)," he said. "I really don't want to cut myself short in trying to get back. So, if I don't come back, I can look at myself and say there's nothing that I could have done different.

"I'm pretty confident that I've done everything I could," he added. "I dedicated this year to baseball, and we're going to go ahead and rehab and see what happens after tryouts and next year."

- JON COOPER



SPECIAL

Chuck James, with wife Julie and son Tucker, is a free agent who's trying to work his way back from shoulder surgery.

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"Personally, it doesn't matter to me if [opposing] pitching is left-handed or right-handed," said Garret Anderson, a career .297 hitter against righties, .290 against lefties. "Obviously, with two different sides, you have different approaches, but that's a whole other story. Statistically, some lefties don't hit lefties. In my case, I've done well my whole career. So that's why I've been able to play every day."

Anderson played on Angels teams with rotations using as many as three lefty starters and won a World Series with the 2002 Angels that relied on one, Jarrod Washburn.

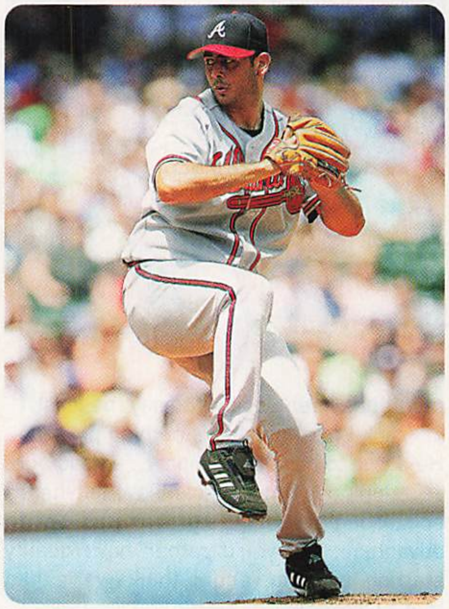
"As long as you have pitchers that get people out, I don't think it really matters if they're left-handed or right-handed," he said.

In this issue, pitchers and hitters have some common ground.

"I'm not so sure it's all that important," said Tim Hudson, who began his career sandwiched between lefties Barry Zito and Mark Mulder on Oakland A's staffs that helped win three division titles, two wild card berths and at least 90 games per year from 2000 through 2004.

"I think it's convenient to have a left-hander or two in your rotation, just because it will neutralize some of the left-handed lineups in the league, but if you have righthanders that are really good, have some quality pitches, especially good changeups and good splits, that can balance that a little bit better than some people might think."

"Clearly every team would like to have [a lefty starter], but it's not a guarantee," added Derek Lowe, who was part of a lefty-less rotation on the 2004 World Champion Boston Red Sox (21-year-old rookie Abe Alvarez made Boston's only left-handed start that year). "As long as you have left-handers in the bullpen, I think that's more important than having just a left-handed starter. You need at least two down there. But as long as you can find ways to win, that's the most important thing.



MLB PHOTOS / RON VESELY

Horacio Ramirez looked like he could be the Braves' next great lefthander after going 12-4 as a rookie in 2003, but his career has been in a downward spiral, and he spent the second half of last season at Triple A in the Washington Nationals' system at age 29.

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"It also depends on the style of pitchers you have," he added. "On our team, the starting five guys, actually six guys, are talented enough to get righthanders and lefthanders out, but, again, there is no formula."

No formula means the possibility exists that things will come back around.

"It's cyclical," said Cox. "I remember one year when I was in Toronto, 38 percent of the starters in our division or in the league were left-handed. It was unbelievable how many lefthanders were in the league."

The pendulum appears to be in the process of swinging back to the left in Atlanta.

The Braves drafted lefthander Mike Minor out of Vanderbilt with the seventh overall selection in June, the second straight year Atlanta's top pick was a left-handed pitcher. In 2008, the Braves chose Brett DeVall (recently underwent arthroscopic elbow surgery) first and Tyler Stovall, another lefty, second. The Braves have selected seven lefties in both 2008 and 2009, nearly 25 percent of its drafted pitchers. So, there are lefties on the way up.

"We have good left-handed pitching," said Wren. "Mike Minor is a very advanced, young left-handed pitcher. We have a young lefthander at Double-A, Jose Ortegano, who has really been impressive and made great strides in the last year. Those are two of the guys that are somewhat close to the big leagues.

"I think we had three or four starters in that rotation in Danville that were left-handed and did very well," he continued. "You just never know. As you put your team together, you'd love to have a left-handed starter, but you still take quality."

"You don't plan anything. You take the best guys in the draft. This year we took Minor. We've taken a lot of lefthanders lately," said Cox, adding with a laugh, "Someday we're going to wind up with four lefthanders in the rotation."

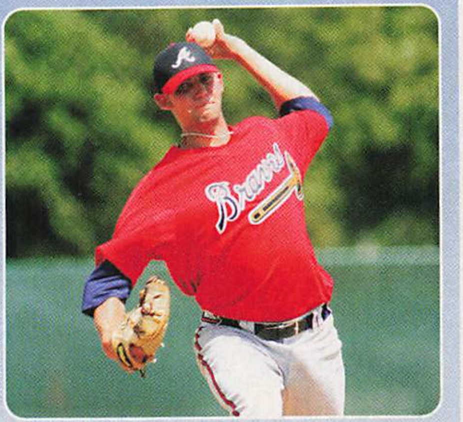
## ON THE HORIZON

**JO-JO REYES** was the only lefthander to start for the Braves last season (five times), and once he went down to Triple-A Gwinnett (4-2 in 15 games, 14 starts), no others were called up to replace him. While the cupboard may have appeared bare for lefty starters in 2009, it doesn't mean that's the case for down the road. Here are just a few young lefty starters who could be on the way to Turner Field.

**Mike Minor:** The Braves' first-round pick in the 2009 draft (seventh overall), Minor has a low-90s fastball and a tremendous changeup. He was 2007 SEC Freshman of the Year at Vanderbilt and was all-conference all three years in college. Minor also made his mark on the international level, being named Baseball America's 2008 Summer Player of the Year after twice beating the Cuban team that won the 2008 Olympic Gold medal (one of Minor's teammates was Washington's first overall pick, Steven Strasburg). Frank Wren is eager to watch Minor pitch in the Arizona Fall League.

**Tyler Stovall:** The Braves' second pick in the 2008 draft has great stuff, as shown by his allowing only 36 hits in 52 innings and holding opposing hitters to a .202 batting average at Danville. He also struck out 57, but walked 56 in 12 starts, so command is his priority. However, he's only 20 years old.

**Cole Rohrbaugh:** An undrafted free agent signed by the Braves on June 1, 2007, the 24-year-old native of Medford, Ore., throws in the low-to-mid 90s and has a devastating curveball. He had his share of struggles at Myrtle Beach (6-8, 5.77, 129 hits in 117 innings), but can ring up the strikeouts.



BILL SETLIFF

Mike Minor, the Braves' No. 1 draft pick last June out of Vanderbilt, pitched in the Arizona Fall League and could be on the fast track to Atlanta.

**Matt Crim:** A 21st-round selection in the 2009 draft, the Summerville, S.C., native, who pitched collegiately at The Citadel, was the Appalachian League Pitcher of the Year in '09, after setting a Danville (rookie advanced) season record with 10 wins. Crim finished 10-2, with a 3.18 ERA, striking out 48 while walking only 10.

**Jose Ortegano:** This 6-1, 145-pound native of Barquisimeto, Venezuela, was a combined 9-7 with a 3.22 ERA at Myrtle Beach (advanced A) and Mississippi (Double A). The 22-year-old features an excellent changeup and seemed to pitch better as the competition improved. He was 5-2 with a 2.83 ERA and a nearly 3:1 strikeouts-to-walks ratio (42:15) at Mississippi after going 4-5, with a 3.49 ERA, with 59 strikeouts vs. 19 walks at Myrtle Beach. He was originally signed by the Braves as an undrafted free agent in 2003.

- JON COOPER

## CC WINS SPAHNIE

**THE BRAVES** may be a little short on left-handed starters at the moment, but they aren't short on left-handed heritage. Warren Spahn remains the winningest lefty in baseball history (363 victories, 356 as a Brave).

Since 1999, the best lefthander in baseball has received the Warren Spahn Award, and this year's winner is the Yankees' CC Sabathia. It's the third straight for Sabathia, who trails only Randy Johnson (1999-2002) in the award's 11-year history.

The Spahn Award will be presented at the Warren Spahn Award Gala, hosted by Oklahoma City's Bricktown Rotary Club at the Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame & Jim Thorpe Museum in January.

The winner is determined by a formula that factors each lefthander's rank in wins, strikeouts and ERA against other southpaws. Sabathia (19-8/3.37/197) and Houston's Wandy Rodriguez (14-12/3.02/193) tied, and Sabathia won by virtue of winning percentage as the tie-breaker (.704 to .538). It was the first time a tie-breaker had to be used.

Other past Spahn Award winners include: Johan Santana (2004, 2006), Dontrelle Willis (2005) and Andy Pettitte (2003). Details on this year's Spahn Gala had not been released at press time.

# HEYWARD!

## Experts Believe Game's Top Prospect Is Ready To Redefine "Fast Track" And Crack The Lineup In 2010

BY BILL BALLEW

Jason Heyward was an easy choice as ChopTalk's No.-1 prospect since he received two major awards as the minor league player of the year in all of baseball.

**THE VERDICT IS IN**, and the experts from both inside and outside the Braves organization interviewed by ChopTalk agree: Jason Heyward will play in Atlanta during the coming season. The only question is whether it will be on Opening Day or later in the year.

"I was impressed with everything about him," said Billy Gardner Jr., manager of the Double-A Montgomery Biscuits. "He'll be in the big leagues next year. I can see him breaking camp with Atlanta if there's an opportunity, but it wouldn't hurt him to go back to the minors and get a few more at-bats before getting the call. He's ready now. It's just a matter of fine-tuning all of that ability."

All that ability led to Heyward being named the 2009 Minor League Player of the Year by both Baseball America and USA Today's Sports Weekly.

"I graded all of his tools above-average," said Mississippi Braves manager Phillip Wellman. "This kid's tools are very refined and polished, and he knows how to use them, which leads me to believe he's ready to make that jump. He can beat you with his bat, his arm, his legs, his defense and his head. You add up all those qualities, and I believe there's a potential superstar in him."

After putting together a remarkable season, Heyward had his stint in the Arizona Fall League terminated after only four games in mid-October. The outfielder, who went 4-for-14 (.286) with three doubles, sat out a week after experiencing discomfort in his lower back as well as the area where the hamstring and gluteus muscles meet. When the situation failed to improve by the end of the month, the 20-year-old wonder returned to Atlanta, where Braves doctors determined some rest and rehabilitation would be appropriate.

Despite the minor setback, Heyward is expected to receive an extended look during spring training from Bobby Cox and the rest of the Atlanta staff. The McDonough, Ga., native is considered to be the Braves' long-term answer in right field, and his tenure could begin as soon as April.

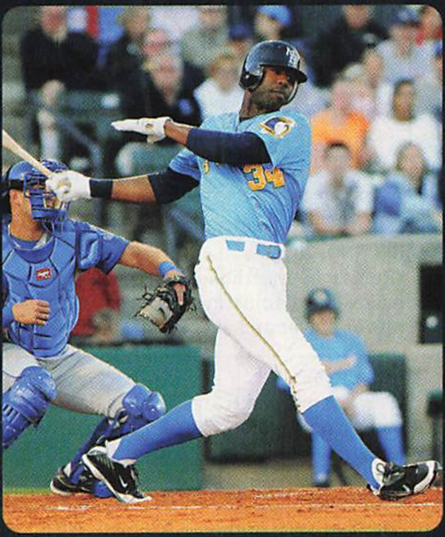
Nearly everyone who saw the 2007 first-round draft pick in the past year came away impressed and believing that Heyward's major league career could begin soon, even though his experience above the Class-A level consists of but 50 games.

Among those concurring is David Bell, who managed Heyward briefly in Arizona with the Peoria Saguaros. A former major league infielder, Bell also managed Double-A Carolina in 2009 and saw Heyward during the final series of the regular season.

ATLANTA BRAVES

"First two weeks since we've been (in Arizona) he's shown a ton of ability," Bell said just prior to Heyward's departure. "He really swings the bat well and plays well in the outfield. The thing that stood out for me is how aggressive and how hard he plays. He's an excellent baserunner. He just does everything well.

"If he's not ready for the big leagues, he's right there (on the verge). The sky's the limit for him, especially with his attitude and his approach to the game."


TOM PRIDDY

Heyward has redefined the "fast track" since coming to terms on a $1.7 million signing bonus with the Braves around his 18th birthday, in August of 2007. After brief stints in the Gulf Coast and Appalachian leagues that year, he spent most of 2008 at Class A Rome and hit .323 with 11 homers and 52 RBIs in 120 games. He capped the season by playing the final week at advanced-A Myrtle Beach.

In 2009, Heyward returned to Myrtle Beach for the first three months. An oblique strain and a hip flexor cost him a couple of weeks, as well as a chance to play in the Carolina League-California League All-Star Game. Otherwise, he was voted the league's "most exciting player" in a managerial poll conducted by Baseball America and batted .296 with 10 home runs and 31 RBIs in 189 at-bats prior to being promoted to Double-A Mississippi on July 3.

"He was a polished player right from the start," said Myrtle Beach manager Rocket Wheeler. "He's an outstanding player, a complete package. Offensively, he has a great idea of what he wants to do when he goes to the plate. He studies pitchers and learns from every at-bat. He has great instincts on the bases when he runs. In the outfield, he has a plus arm and makes diving catches. To have someone of his caliber in this league at 19 years old, that's very rare."

The increase in competition did nothing to slow Heyward's development. In fact, several members of the Atlanta front office believe the outfielder hit the ball harder and with more consistency against Southern League pitchers than he did in the Carolina League. He batted .425 in his first 80 at-bats in Double-A, which led to his earning Topps Southern League Player of the Month honors for July, even before he turned 20 on Aug. 9.

"Right away I noticed the discipline he has, especially for such a young player," said Mississippi manager Wellman. "He has tremendous bat speed, and he doesn't swing at many bad pitches. He understands the situation of the game, when they might be pitching around him and when the pitcher is going to come after him. Most teams wouldn't challenge him. They'd throw him four changeups and kept everything low, because he showed them if they left it up in the zone, he'd hit it 500 feet."

Heyward played against the Montgomery Biscuits for the first time on Aug. 2-5 at Trustmark Park and hit a home run with two RBIs in his first game versus the Tampa Bay affiliate. After going 5-for-13 (.385) in the five-game series, Heyward saw the team again on Aug. 12-15 without the same type of success. Despite posting only two hits in 14 at-bats (.143) over four games, he still impressed Montgomery manager Gardner as much as the first time the clubs played.

"I knew how young he was, so I expected to see some blemishes. But I didn't see anything that came close," Gardner said. "He never lost focus, and he did a great job of handling the ups and downs in that second series against us. He carried himself

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

beyond his years with his maturity, which is more impressive to me than his ability. At the same time, he's a big-tools guy with a very high ceiling. He looks like a major league player right now."

By the end of August, Heyward owned a .352 average against Double-A pitching, with seven home runs and 30 RBIs in 162 at-bats. Selected the top batting prospect in the Southern League, he then spent a week with Triple-A Gwinnett. In 11 trips to the plate, Heyward stroked four hits to finish the season with an overall batting average of .323 with 17 home runs.

## COMPARING HEYWARD TO FIVE ALL-STARS AT THE SAME STAGE

**DURING THE PAST QUARTER-CENTURY**, the Braves have developed some of the game's top prospects in the minor leagues. Listed below are five of the organization's best home-grown position players during that time, along with the comments in quotes that the trade publication Baseball America wrote about the players just prior to their rookie seasons. For comparison, similar information and comments about Heyward follow the others.

**ANDRUW JONES:** Jones, like Heyward, was named Baseball America's Minor League Player of the Year, earning the recognition in his first two full professional seasons - 1995 and 1996. Andruw played with the Braves' top three farm clubs in 1996 and eventually vaulted to the majors by the end of the season (31 games and the World Series). Andruw then became a regular starter at age 20 in 1997, a year before winning his first Gold Glove.

"The quintessential five-tool talent, Jones could become a 40-40 threat. He owns amazing speed and power, and has the strongest outfield arm in the system," wrote Baseball America.

**CHIPPER JONES:** The first overall pick in the 1990 draft, Jones ranked atop the Braves' prospect list for four consecutive seasons, from 1992-95. Chipper missed the entire 1994 season due to left knee surgery, but took over the starting job at third base in 1995 at age 23.

"Most young players' defensive skills reach major league standards before their offense catches up. Jones is an exception, wielding a potent stick that scouts believe

## AN OPPONENT'S SCOUT RATES JASON HEYWARD

**MOST SCOUTS** grade players on a 20-80 scale, with 20 ranking as the lowest grade and 80 as the highest. Average major league ability is considered to be 50. For most scouts, 80s are few and far between, for that number represents the best they have ever seen at any level. The following are the ratings given to Heyward by an anonymous scout who covers the upper levels of the Braves' farm system for a National League team.

### ATLANTA BRAVES PROSPECT REPORT

SCOUT: Anonymous

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| UNIFORM NO.<br>#12 | DATE OF BIRTH<br>8/9/1989 | AGE<br>20 |

| | LAST NAME | FIRST NAME | MIDDLE NAME | POSITION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PLAYER | Heyward | Jason | A. | RF |

| ADDRESS | HEIGHT | WEIGHT | BATS | THROWS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| McDonough, GA | 6'4' | 220 | L | L |

| TEAM NAME | CITY | STATE |
|---|---|---|
| Gwinnett Braves | Lawrenceville | GA |

| RATING KEY | NON-PITCHER | PRESENT | FUTURE |
|---|---|---|---|
| 80 - Outstanding<br>70 - Very Good<br>60 - Well above average<br>50 - High Average<br>40 - Average<br>30 - Below Average<br>20 - Fair<br>10 - Poor | HITTING | 70 | |
| | POWER | 65 | |
| | SPEED | 60 | |
| | DEFENSE | 65 | |
| | ARM | 65-70 | |
| | INTANGIBLES | 70 | |

**ABILITIES**

**HITTING: 70**
"He has an unorthodox swing that works. It's short and quick with a lot of power. He makes great adjustments during a game. There's no doubt in my mind he's going to hit for power and average in the big leagues."

**POWER: 65**
"Few batters can truly hit the ball out from pole to pole, but this kid can. When his body fully develops, he's going to have outstanding power. I see him hitting 25-plus homers annually while maintaining a high batting average."

**SPEED: 60**
"He runs very well for a big man. With his intelligence and baseball instincts, he'll make the most of his ability to run. He covers a lot of ground in the outfield, and he goes from first to third and from second to home very well."

**DEFENSE: 65**
"He's an outstanding rightfielder, but I believe he's a good enough athlete to play center field. He gets great jumps on balls in the gaps, and he's able to make diving catches. His defense is very underrated."

**ARM: 65-70**
"I was surprised to learn he wasn't a pitcher in high school. He has a very strong arm. His throws have great carry and outstanding accuracy. He'll be the kind of player teams will be afraid to run on in the big leagues."

**INTANGIBLES: 70**
"I love the way he carries himself. He handles the highs and the lows the same way. He's very aggressive on the field, and he plays hard. You can tell he's a very intelligent person and player."

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT**
"Heyward was the best player I saw in the minor leagues this year. He's still very young, but he has an ideal body, and all the tools are in place. If I had to guess, I'd say he'll make the big club out of spring training. If not, he'll spend a half-season in Triple-A, but he'll be with Atlanta at some point in 2010. Once he builds a foundation up there, he has a chance to be one of the best players in the game."

will produce consistent .300-20-80 seasons in the majors. A natural line-drive hitter with exceptional bat control, Jones could resurrect the days of slugging third basemen if he continues to grow."

**RYAN KLESKO:** The first baseman changed gloves and platooned in left field with Atlanta in 1994 at age 22 and finished third in National League Rookie of the Year balloting. Deemed the top prospect in the farm system in 1991, Klesko entered '94 ranked second in the organization.

"Klesko was the premier power hitter in the International League in 1993. While he sometimes tries to hit the ball to the next county, Klesko makes solid contact and doesn't strike out much."

**JAVY LOPEZ:** The catcher emerged as the Atlanta starter during the 1994 season at age 23. Lopez, who played six full seasons in the minors, was rated as the Braves' fourth-best prospect prior to his rookie season.

"Lopez crushes the ball with his muscular shoulders and raw strength. He's primarily a contact, line-drive hitter, but should produce 20 home runs annually in the major leagues."

**BRIAN McCANN:** McCann made the jump to the big leagues from Double-A Mississippi in June 2005 at age 21. The second-round pick in the 2002 draft took over the starting duties shortly after his arrival in Atlanta. He was rated as the third-best prospect in the organization before the 1995 season.

"McCann has a sweet left-handed swing and as much raw power as anyone in the organization. He employs a disciplined approach at the plate and makes solid contact. Drafted primarily for his bat, he has dedicated himself to improving behind the plate and was named the Carolina League's best defensive catcher."

**JASON HEYWARD:** Scouts failed to get a good read on Heyward's potential while he was pitched around during his senior season at Henry County High, which allowed him to fall in the Braves' lap with the 14th overall pick in the 2007 draft.

"Heyward has lightning-quick bat speed, his defense and arm strength are above-average, he runs well, and at 6-foot-4, 225 pounds, he could still grow more. He's been compared to Dave Parker, Willie McCovey, Fred McGriff and... you get the drift."

- BILL BALLEW

## BATTER UP!

BRIAN McCANN

# I'M HAPPY I DON'T NEED GLASSES NEXT SEASON

**AFTER TALKING TO THE DOCTORS,** I decided to go ahead and get the second Lasik surgery sooner rather than later, because I knew I didn't want to play another season in glasses.

I had the surgery in mid-October, because once we talked about what I wanted - not playing with glasses - and what the surgeon recommended, it made sense to go ahead and have it as soon as possible. My eyes are pretty much back to normal, and I'm not wearing any corrective lenses.

I didn't have any hesitation about having the surgery again for two reasons. I knew I didn't want to wear glasses again and that the results from the first surgery were so good that I played without any trouble for a year and a half. The other thing was that I knew that many people have to go back to have re-correction surgery.

My eyes were so bad before the first surgery that the slight change that occurred just needed to be re-adjusted. It wasn't a big deal. The recovery took about a week, and my eyes are continuing to adjust and get better with every week.

I'm really glad I had the surgery again. Even though I'm grateful that we were able to use the glasses this past season so that I wouldn't have to have surgery during the season, I knew that there were some pitches that I didn't get because of the glasses. My depth perception was slightly off. Once we sat down and talked it through, having the surgery was a total no-brainer.

It was awesome for the Braves to keep a pitcher of Huddy's (Tim Hudson) caliber. It's great to look at our team and realize we have a legitimate chance to win a World Series. Look at our rotation, 1 through 5 or 1 through 6, and there's no reason to believe we won't have a great season. I'm excited about that.

> "MY EYES ARE PRETTY MUCH BACK TO NORMAL, AND I'M NOT WEARING ANY CORRECTIVE LENSES."

The positive thing about the Braves' position is that we're not searching for No. 1 or No. 2 starters. Those guys can be really tough to find. We have a core group of players to work with.

It's almost sad to think that this time next year Bobby Cox won't be the manager of the Braves. I've been a big Braves fan since I was a little kid. He's been running the show around here since then, and it's run smoothly. Then to play for him, personally, it's been like a dream.

We've got 25 guys who buy into his philosophy, playing hard to win - but we're playing for Bobby, too. He gives us so much leeway to go out and play our game. He's a player's dream. Knowing that next year will be his final season managing the Braves adds to the motivation.

You look at guys, even though they're in their young to mid 20s, there's no reason we can't compete. We talk about this all the time, and we're ready to win. Look at guys like Tommy Hanson and Jair Jurrjens - they're 23 years old and already making an impact. In the case of Hanson, that speaks to the Braves' farm system and what a good job they're doing of identifying and developing talent. He was the No. 1 pitcher in our organization, and he was able to come in this season and help us win right away.

We're looking to the future and a guy like Jason Heyward, the No. 1 position player, who's poised to do the exact same thing. It's exciting.

Being involved with the Rally Foundation means a lot to me, and to my wife, Ashley. I always wanted to be the type of professional athlete that would give back to my community and try to be a positive figure. Rally gives us a chance to do that. Ashley does a lot of the work behind the scenes. I use my name, but she's the one who's in there doing the work.

## Continued Devotion To Player Development Results In Strong Line Of Talent Climbing Toward Atlanta

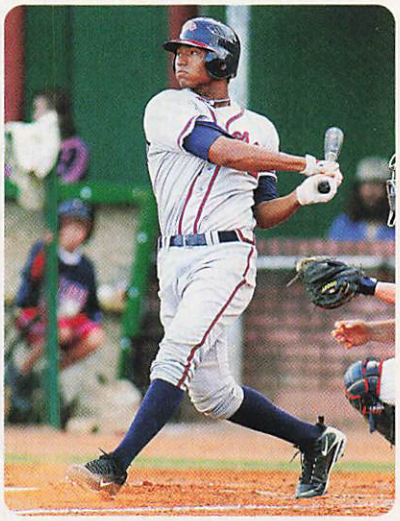
# STATE OF THE FARM

BY BILL BALLEW

**THE BRAVES** still operate under a belief that has not changed over the past quarter-century. In late 1985, Bobby Cox returned to Atlanta from Toronto to serve as the team's general manager. He and then-scouting director Paul Snyder determined that in order for the Braves to compete over the long haul, they must have an unyielding devotion to player development.

That philosophy remained readily apparent at Turner Field in 2009. Over the last two months of the season, the entire starting infield of catcher Brian McCann, first baseman Adam LaRoche, second baseman Martin Prado, third baseman Chipper Jones and shortstop Yunel Escobar entered the professional ranks by signing with the Braves. In fact, 19 of the 38 players on the major league roster in mid-October were homegrown products. Six others came to Atlanta via trades that sent minor leaguers to other teams.

Over the years, a few alterations have taken place. Frank Wren is now the general manager, Tony DeMacio was recently named scouting director, and former Braves scout Kurt Kemp has guided the farm system for the past three-plus years. Yet, the more things change, the more they stay the same. That applies perfectly to the Atlanta philosophy of developing talent, which includes placing a heavy emphasis on the June draft and scouring the globe for prospects by using an aggressive and well-organized strategy under the guidance of international scouting director Johnny Almaraz.


BILL SETUFF

The top prospect in the Gulf Coast League last season, catcher Christian Bethancourt, is one of many talented position players the Braves have beginning to assert themselves in the lower levels of the farm system.

The returns are apparent. Tommy Hanson entered last season deemed the Braves' top prospect and proceeded to emerge as the top rookie righthander in baseball following his early June promotion. Centerfielder Jordan Schafer made the Opening Day lineup and homered in his first game before a wrist injury limited his production for the rest of the year.

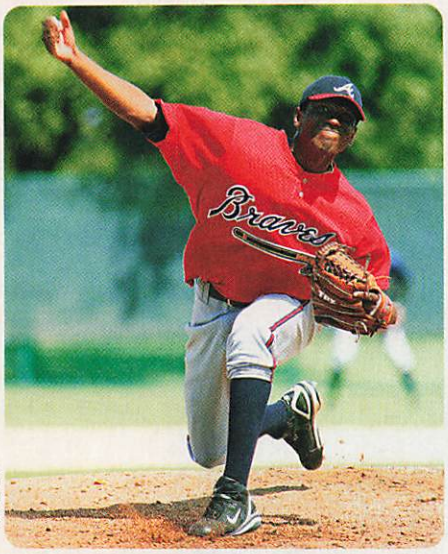
More help is on the immediate horizon, led by rightfielder Jason Heyward, whose resume is every bit as impressive as that of Hanson. First baseman Freddie Freeman will be knocking on the door in the near future, and numerous pitchers - among them Stephen Marek, Jonnny Venters and Todd Redmond - could earn specific roles in Atlanta at some point in 2010.

Aside from such potentially imminent arrivals, the strength of the Atlanta system is the amount of pitching percolating in the lower reaches of the organization. The pipeline of position players, meanwhile, is nowhere near as full. Part of that can be attributed to a trio of blockbuster deals made over the past three years.

In mid-2007, the Braves surrendered current Texas Rangers Jarrod Saltalamacchia and Elvis Andrus in the Mark Teixeira deal. Last off-season, they sent Tyler Flowers, Brent Lillibridge and Jon Gilmore to Chicago for Javier Vazquez. And early last June, they traded Gorkys Hernandez to Pittsburgh for Nate McLouth. Pitchers Neftali Feliz, Matt Harrison, Beau Jones, Santos Rodriguez, Jeff Locke and Charlie Morton were also parts of those trades. For most organizations, such transactions would cripple a farm system for several years, but the Braves' philosophy prevented that from happening.

As a result, after Heyward and Freeman, the majority of the Braves' top position prospects are just now establishing themselves in the minors. Panama catcher Christian Bethancourt, who was considered the premier international player on the market in 2008, was rated the top prospect in the Gulf Coast League this past summer and made a seamless transition to Danville during the final month of the season. At Danville, he joined shortstop Mycal Jones, Atlanta's fourth-round draft pick in June, who displays excellent athleticism and the polished tools to run and hit for average and power. Outfielder Adam Milligan tore through Danville and Rome before ending his first pro season at advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach.

The upper reaches of the system are highlighted by leftfielder Cody Johnson and shortstop Brandon Hicks. Both players have above-average power for their positions. Johnson paced the organization with 32 home runs in 2009. Both Johnson and Hicks lack consistency at the plate, but that's the only major hurdle they have to clear in order to contribute at the major league level.


BILL SETLIFF

Julio Teheran, our No. 2-ranked prospect, won't turn 19 until next month but made major strides last season, dominating at Danville before a promotion to Rome.

Even with the loss of Feliz, Morton and the other pitchers, the Braves have one of the deepest pitching organizations in baseball. That was evident at the four lowest levels, beginning with Myrtle Beach, where several scouts stated there were as many as 11 true prospects pitching for the Pelicans in 2009. Starter Richard Sullivan, young veterans Edgar Osuna and Jose Ortegano, and reliever Lee Hyde were impressive against Carolina League competition. Lefthander Cole Rohrbough endured a difficult season but had as much potential as any pitcher in the league.

## CHOPTALK'S TOP 10 PROSPECTS

(Age as of Opening Day 2010; 2009 club(s) and composite stats - BA-HR-RBI for hitters, W-L, ERA for pitchers)

**1** **JASON HEYWARD**, 20, OF, Myrtle Beach/Mississippi/Gwinnett, .323-17-63
**2** **JULIO TEHERAN**, 19, RHP, Danville/Rome, 3-4, 3.65
**3** **MIKE MINOR**, 22, LHP, Rome, 0-1, 0.64
**4** **CRAIG KIMBREL**, 21, RHP, Rome/Myrtle Beach/Mississippi/Gwinnett, 2-3, 2.85
**5** **FREDDIE FREEMAN**, 20, 1B, Myrtle Beach/Mississippi, .282-8-58
**6** **RANDALL DELGADO**, 20, RHP, Rome, 5-10, 4.35
**7** **CHRISTIAN BETHANCOURT**, 18, C, Gulf Coast/Danville, .277-4-27
**8** **ZEKE SPRUILL**, 20, RHP, Rome/Gulf Coast, 9-6, 3.25
**9** **CODY JOHNSON**, 21, OF, Myrtle Beach/Mississippi, .239-32-87
**10** **J.J. HOOVER**, 22, RHP, Rome, 7-6, 3.35

### THE NEXT 20

**11** **ADAM MILLIGAN**, 22, OF, Danville/Rome/Myrtle Beach, .344-14-49
**12** **MYCAL JONES**, 22, SS, Danville, .258-4-27
**13** **DIMASTHER DELGADO**, 21, LHP, Rome, 5-7, 3.61
**14** **TYLER STOVALL**, 20, LHP, Danville, 3-2, 3.12
**15** **BRANDON HICKS**, 24, SS, Mississippi, .237-10-48
**16** **DAVID HALE**, 22, RHP, Danville, 2-1, 1.13
**17** **BRETT OBERHOLTZER**, 20, LHP, Danville, 6-2, 2.01
**18** **ROBINSON LOPEZ**, 19, RHP, Gulf Coast, 3-1, 1.29
**19** **BRETT DEVALL**, 20, LHP, Rome, 4-4, 3.52
**20** **COLE ROHRBOUGH**, 22, LHP, Myrtle Beach, 6-8, 5.77
**21** **JONNY VENTERS**, 25, LHP, Mississippi/Gwinnett, 8-11, 4.42
**22** **RICHARD SULLIVAN**, 22, LHP, Rome/Myrtle Beach/Mississippi, 6-14, 4.60
**23** **CALEB BREWER**, 21, RHP, Gulf Coast, 3-3, 2.82
**24** **KYLE COFIELD**, 23, RHP, Mississippi, 10-5, 3.90
**25** **STEPHEN MAREK**, 26, RHP, Mississippi/Gwinnett, 3-4, 6.00
**26** **JOSE ORTEGANO**, 22, LHP, Myrtle Beach/Mississippi, 9-7, 3.22
**27** **SCOTT DIAMOND**, 23, LHP, Mississippi, 5-10, 3.50
**28** **EDGAR OSUNA**, 21, LHP, Myrtle Beach/Mississippi, 7-10, 4.02
**29** **JESUS SUCRE**, 21, C, Rome/Myrtle Beach, .290-6-38
**30** **PAUL CLEMENS**, 22, RHP, Rome, 6-5, 5.91

Last year's Rome club featured the bulk of the Braves' 2008 draft class, led by Zeke Spruill, J.J. Hoover and Brett DeVall. Panama's Randall Delgado and the Dominican's Dimasther Delgado also blossomed during the second half of the season and emerged as top prospects. Late in the season, Rome also had lefthander Mike Minor, the seventh overall pick in the 2009 draft, who is expected to move quickly through the farm system. Rome also received righthander Julio Teheran in August after he dominated the Appalachian League for eight weeks to earn top prospect recognition in that league.

Danville won the Appy championship and led the league with a 3.05 team ERA, thanks to pitchers such as Tyler Stovall, Thomas Berryhill, Matthew Crim, Brett Oberholtzer, Chris Masters and Cory Rasmus.

The pitcher who may be the closest to providing assistance in Atlanta is hard-throwing right-handed reliever Craig Kimbrel. After being drafted in the third round in 2008 and pitching at three different levels, he saw action with all four of the Braves' full-season clubs last year. Scouts consider Kimbrel to be the most overpowering reliever to emerge from the farm system since Mark Wohlers in the early 1990s. In fact, many observers would not be surprised to see him contribute in the major leagues by the end of the coming season.

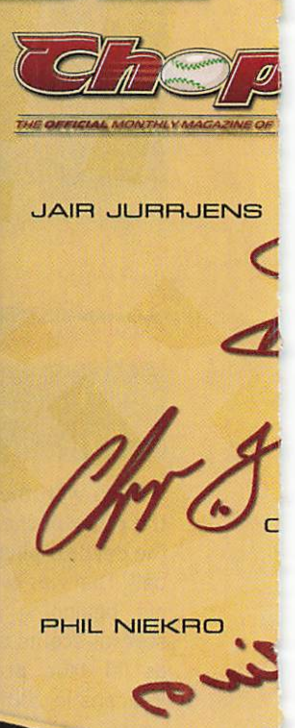
The Braves have a reputation throughout the scouting community for trading the right minor league players in exchange for major leaguers. In other words, the organization does an excellent job of honestly evaluating the talent on hand and making the correct decisions about which ones to keep. That assessment is evident with the contributions homegrown players have made in Atlanta, a trend the organization hopes will continue in 2010 and beyond.

## TOP PROSPECTS BY POSITION

(Team = Projected Placement To Start 2010)

| | |
|---|---|
| **C** | **CHRISTIAN BETHANCOURT**<br>19, Rome |
| **1B** | **FREDDIE FREEMAN**<br>20, Mississippi |
| **2B** | **YOEL CAMPUSANO**<br>23, Myrtle Beach |
| **3B** | **DONELL LINARES**<br>26, Mississippi |
| **SS** | **MYCAL JONES**<br>22, Rome |
| **LF** | **CODY JOHNSON**<br>21, Mississippi |
| **CF** | **MATT YOUNG**<br>27, Gwinnett |
| **RF** | **JASON HEYWARD**<br>20, Atlanta/Gwinnett |
| **RHP** | **JULIO TEHERAN**<br>19, Rome |
| **LHP** | **MIKE MINOR**<br>22, Mississippi |
| **CL** | **CRAIG KIMBREL**<br>21, Gwinnett |

# HOLIDAY SP



## WHO WANTS A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE ANYWAY?

We don't know any Braves fans that want either a partridge or a pear tree for Christmas - let alone the two of them together. But we do know plenty of Braves fans that would love to have FREE Braves autographs and a discount on Braves merchandise.

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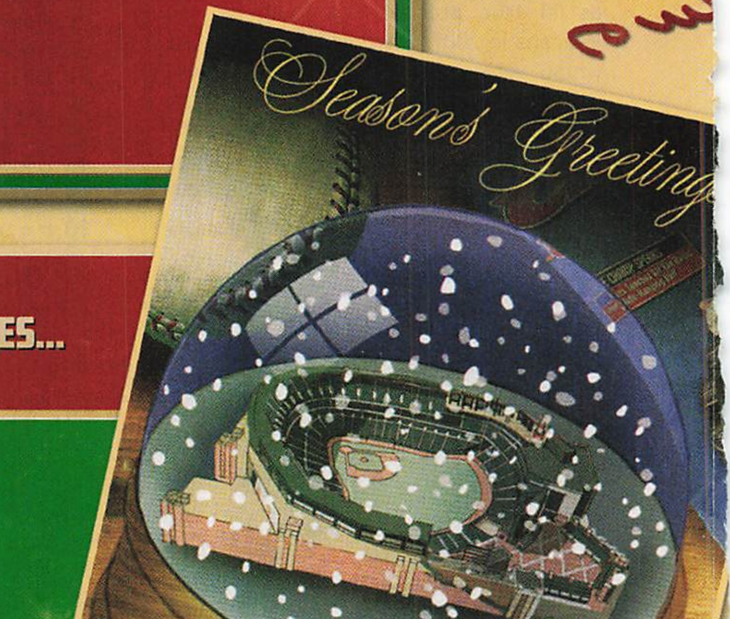

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## TOP POSITION PLAYERS

**1 JASON HEYWARD, OF**
The premier rightfielder is on the verge of breaking into the major league lineup after earning numerous Minor League Player of the Year honors in 2009.

**2 FREDDIE FREEMAN, 1B**
An RBI machine who was voted the best defensive first baseman in the Carolina and Southern leagues last year and soon could knock on the door in Atlanta.

**3 CHRISTIAN BETHANCOURT, C**
Considered the top prospect in the Gulf Coast League in 2009, this Panama native is living up to his reputation as the top international signee of 2008.

**4 CODY JOHNSON, OF**
The leftfielder is one of the premier power hitters in the minor leagues but is still working on his outfield play and his consistency at the plate.

**5 ADAM MILLIGAN, OF**
This hard-hitting outfielder is flying under the radar after missing 2008 due to a knee injury and playing for three teams in as many months in his first pro season in 2009.

**6 MYCAL JONES, SS**
The fourth-round pick last June is one of the farm system's best all-around athletes with fluid actions at shortstop and a solid combination of speed and power at the plate.

**7 BRANDON HICKS, SS**
The most consistent defensive infielder in the organization, Hicks displayed his power potential late in the season but struggled once again to hit for average.

**8 JESUS SUCRE, C**
The 2009 season was a breakthrough year for Sucre, who hit consistently for the first time while improving his catching skills and displaying his terrific arm strength.

**9 ERNESTO MEJIA, 1B**
Big first baseman returned in late 2009 after missing nearly a full year due to a knee injury, and is looking to build on his breakout season from 2008 at Myrtle Beach.

**10 BRAEDEN SCHLEHUBER, C**
Atlanta's fourth-round pick in 2008 struggled to hit above .200 at Rome but continued to show excellent fielding skills, including an outstanding arm behind the plate.

**11 YOEL CAMPUSANO, 2B**
This steady defensive infielder, who can play second and third and does an excellent job of turning the doubleplay, makes consistent contact and uses the entire field.

**12 RIANN SPANJER-FURSTENBURG, 1B**
A native of South Africa, the Danville slugger paced the Atlanta organization with a .359 batting average and showed plus power in his professional debut.

**13 GERRY RODRIGUEZ, 1B**
The former catcher exhibited impressive power at Rome and Myrtle Beach in 2009 by ranking second in the organization with 23 homers and third with 83 RBIs.

**14 MATT YOUNG, OF**
The hard-nosed outfielder and leadoff hitter led the Atlanta organization with 87 runs scored, 10 triples and 43 stolen bases in 2009 and can play infield in a pinch.

**15 COLE MILES, OF/2B**
The Braves are trying to increase the speed-oriented player's versatility by working him at second base as well as center field following a solid showing at Myrtle Beach.

**16 LUIS SUMOZA, OF**
Acquired from Boston in 2008, this outfielder showed promise last season at Rome, including an above-average arm with good defense and the ability to hit to the opposite field.

**17 TRAVIS JONES, 2B**
After earning all-star honors in the Carolina League in 2008, this infielder stole 23 bases and posted 22 doubles in Double-A but struggled with consistency at the plate and in the field.

**18 MATT KENNELLY, C**
A member of the Australian World Cup team this fall, he showed solid fielding skills and potential at the plate while splitting the year between Myrtle Beach and Rome.

**19 CONCEPCION RODRIGUEZ, OF**
The Braves are waiting for Rodriguez to blossom into an all-around player after he continued to show flashes of excellence last year at Mississippi.

**20 DONELL LINARES, 3B**
In his first season with the Braves, this infielder tied for the organization lead with 87 RBIs after fleeing Cuba and spending three years stuck in the Dominican Republic.

## TOP PITCHERS

**1 JULIO TEHERAN, RH**
Voted the top prospect in the Appalachian League in 2009, the 18-year-old from Colombia lived up to the hype even after a promotion to Rome and could begin to move quickly.

**2 MIKE MINOR, LH**
The Braves' No.-1 pick in the 2009 draft (seventh overall), this Vanderbilt product was a man among boys in four late-season outings at Rome and should jump on the fast track in 2010.

**3 CRAIG KIMBREL, RH**
The most overpowering pitcher in the farm system has pitched at three or more levels in each of his first two years and could see Turner Field by the end of 2010.

**4 RANDALL DELGADO, RH**
The young Panamanian gained the command and control of his pitches in the second half at Rome, which made his electric stuff even harder to hit.

**5 ZEKE SPRUILL, RH**
The third-round pick out of Marietta, Ga., in 2008 won his first 13 professional decisions with impressive polish, a deep repertoire and bulldog tenacity.

**6 J.J. HOOVER, RH**
This 10th-round pick in 2008 has impressive control and keeps his pitches down in the strike zone, which helped him lead the organization in strikeouts.

**7 DIMASTHER DELGADO, LH**
One of the game's more unheralded pitching prospects has a great changeup that he mixes well with his low-90s fastball and his willingness to pitch inside.

**8 TYLER STOVALL, LH**
Atlanta's second-round pick in 2008 is working out the kinks with his control, but his overall feel for pitching results in high strikeout totals and numerous groundball outs.

**9 DAVID HALE, RH**
The Princeton product was a two-way player in college, but his strong arm and ideal frame should help him blossom while he focuses his efforts on pitching.

**10 BRETT OBERHOLTZER, LH**
The southpaw uses an unorthodox delivery to produce movement on his fastball and a good changeup and curveball that limited lefty batters to a .191 average.

**11 ROBINSON LOPEZ, RH**
Braves fans looking for a sleeper should take note of Robinson, who ranked third in the minors in ERA last year in the Gulf Coast League with three solid pitches.

**12 BRETT DEVALL, LH**
The first pick in the 2008 draft pitched well during most of his 10 outings at Rome and should be ready for spring training after recent arthroscopic elbow surgery.

**13 COLE ROHRBOUGH, LH**
After an injury-marred 2008, the lefty dominated several outings at Myrtle Beach but looked lost in others due to inconsistency with his mechanics.

**14 JONNY VENTERS, LH**
Has been in the organization since 2004 and has overcome Tommy John surgery by displaying electric stuff once again that could lead to a bullpen role in Atlanta.

**15 RICHARD SULLIVAN, LH**
The southpaw pitched better than his record from last year suggests, and he survived being pushed a little too fast.

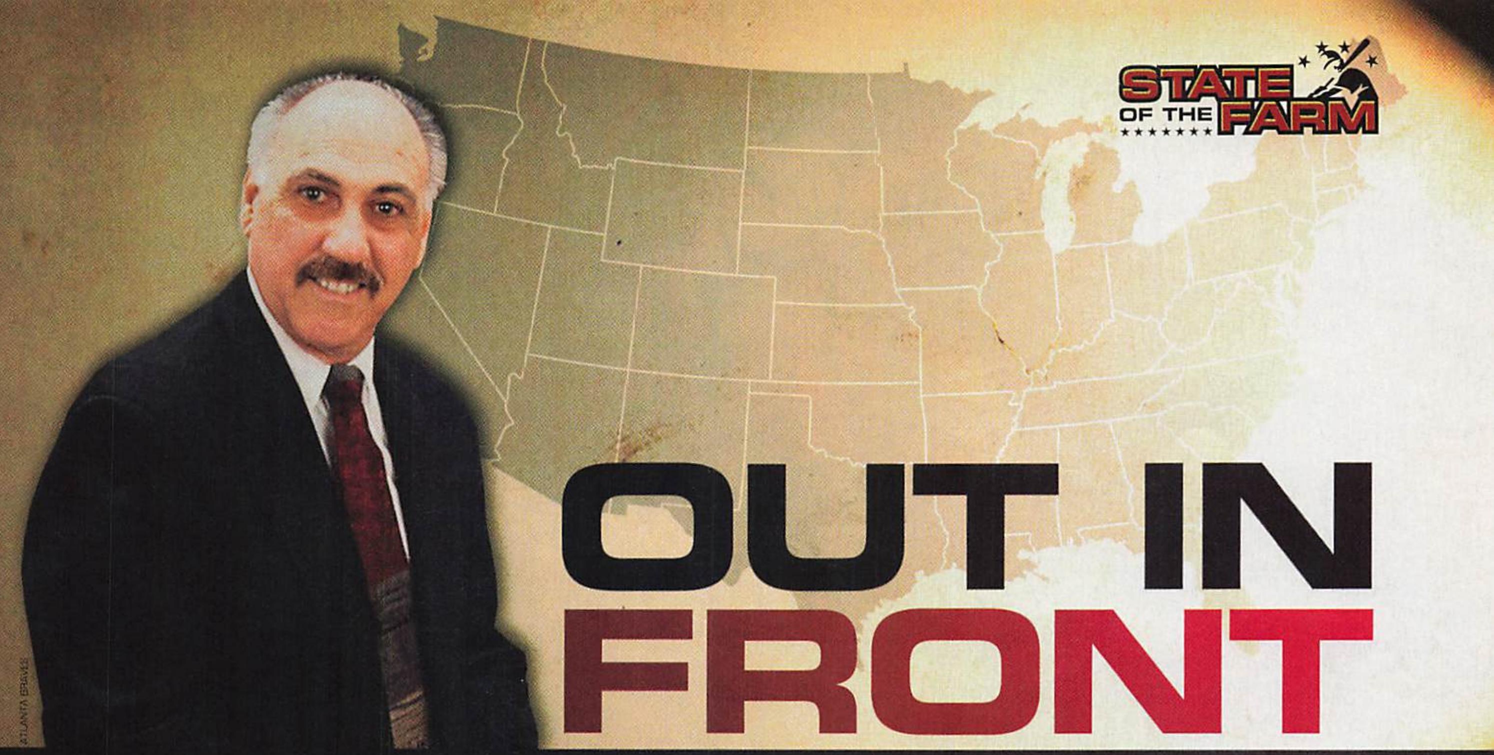
**16 CALEB BREWER, RH**
A hip injury sidelined him during the 2008 season before the hard-thrower developed into one of the top prospects in the Gulf Coast League last year.

**17 KYLE COFIELD, RH**
Paced Mississippi with 10 wins last year and ranked among the Southern League's top 10 in ERA despite leading the league with 89 walks.

**18 STEPHEN MAREK, RH**
The last remaining piece of the Mark Teixeira trade made steady progress in the second half of 2009 and could be a bullpen candidate in Atlanta in 2010.

**19 JOSE ORTEGANO, LH**
Outstanding command of three pitches and an ability to keep hitters off-balance is the strength of this quintessential crafty lefthander's game.

**20 SCOTT DIAMOND, LH**
The Canadian who was signed as a non-drafted free agent and led the organization in wins in 2008 succeeds by pitching to contact in the lower third of the strike zone.



ATLANTA BRAVES

# OUT IN FRONT

## NEW SCOUTING DIRECTOR TONY DEMACIO RESPONSIBLE FOR SIGNING GLAVINE AND CHIPPER

BY BILL BALLEW

**IF THERE WERE** a rookie of the year award for scouts, Tony DeMacio would have received the recognition with ease in 1983. Covering New England for the Braves in his debut season as a scout, the Pennsylvania native convinced then-scouting director Paul Snyder that Tom Glavine was worthy of a high-round pick. Snyder, displaying the instincts that helped make him a Braves Hall of Famer, listened to his new area scout, and Glavine became the first player DeMacio ever signed to a contract.

Twenty-six years later, DeMacio is the Braves' new scouting director, a position he accepted in mid-October after his predecessor, Roy Clark, took the Washington Nationals' offer to be their assistant general manager and vice president of player development. The 63-year-old DeMacio believes in hard work and trusting his staff and intends to instill the same philosophies in his scouts that proved successful in signing Glavine.

"I broke in under Paul (Snyder) in 1983, and I believe our philosophies are very similar," DeMacio said. "I really don't see much of a deviation from what's been done here before. Paul was the best. He always listened intently to what you had to say and gave you time to discuss your players. He is the ultimate professional, a great person, and anyone who worked with Paul wants to make him proud."

DeMacio learned the nuances of scouting from Snyder for eight years prior to leaving the Braves to work for Cleveland in 1991. While Glavine was his first signing, his last with Atlanta involved the first overall pick in the 1990 draft. DeMacio was working in Florida as a cross-checker that season and wound up receiving credit, along with Dean Jongewaard, for signing Chipper Jones.

In his four years with Cleveland, DeMacio signed such future major leaguers as Manny Ramirez, Paul Shuey and Paul Byrd. He joined the Cubs' scouting department in 1995 prior to being named the Orioles' scouting director in 1999. He was hired by then-Baltimore GM Frank Wren, and wound up running the Orioles' draft through the 2004 season.

"I don't think the basics of scouting and playing the game have ever changed," said DeMacio, who worked with Pittsburgh in 2005-06 before returning to the Braves in December 2006 as a major league scout and special assistant to the general manager. "Players still have to be able to run, throw, hit and field. I don't think that part will ever change. The biggest difference is a lot of clubs have gone to statistical analysis in making their selections. I believe that's the only major change I've seen over the years."

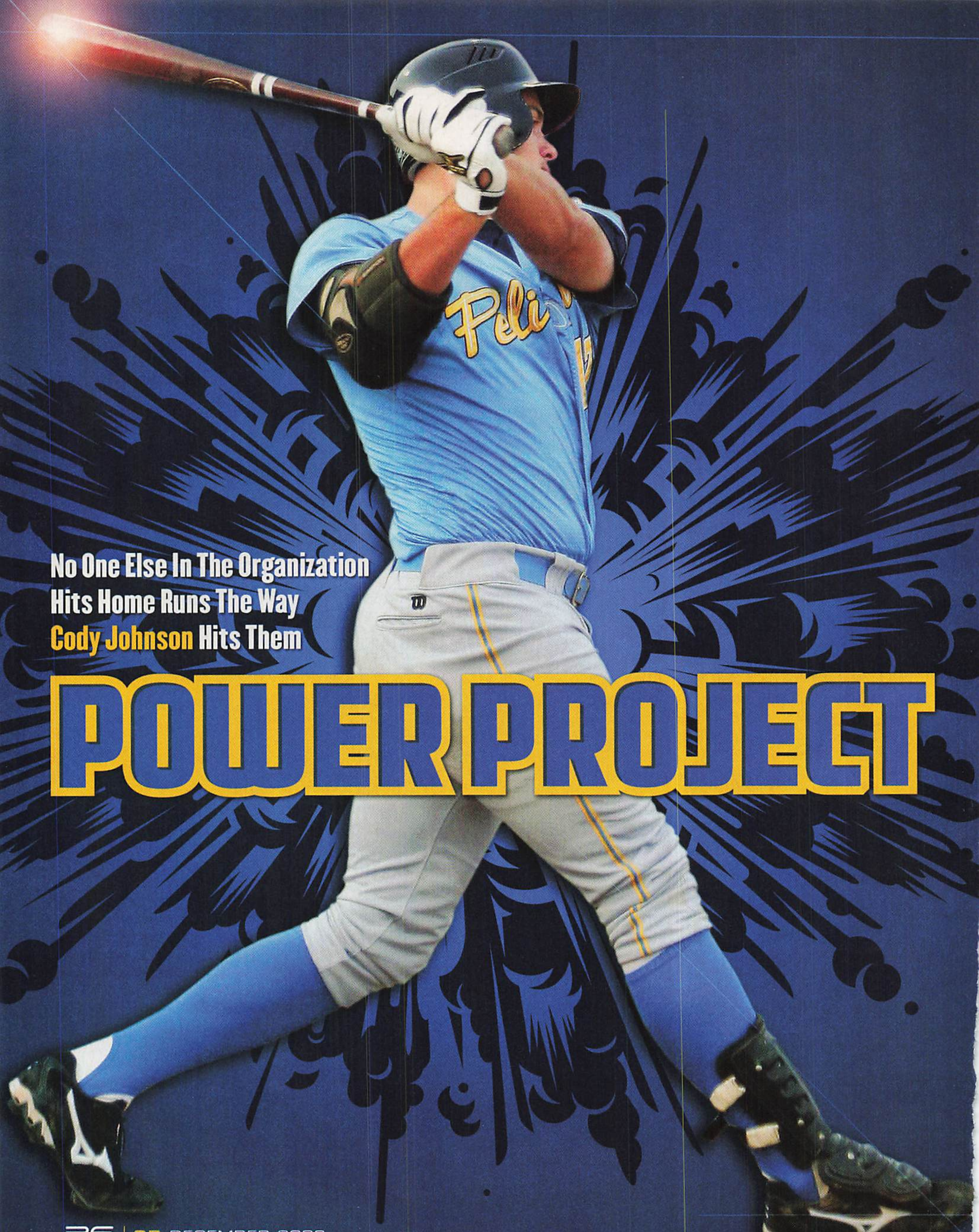
The Braves have always considered a player's statistics prior to the drafting and signing process, but the emphasis created by Snyder and continued under Clark has centered on evaluating the entire package. Makeup, which includes a player's attitude, desire and other intangibles, plays as big a role as his physical abilities and performances on the field. Determining those traits is the job of the area scouts, which is no easy chore. That approach, says DeMacio, will remain the same.

"I don't see much change taking place. Somebody different will be directing the draft, and that's all," said DeMacio, who attended Parsons College (Fairfield, Iowa) where he played baseball for four years. "I think most of the staff will remain in place. Change is always occurring, and we all have to make adaptations. Hopefully with this change, I'll be able to help this organization attain the high level of success we've had for so many years."

The continuing rise in signing bonuses and the ongoing needs in the farm system as well as at the major league level make the scouting director's job on draft day more challenging than ever. DeMacio welcomes the responsibility, especially since the fruits of those labors so often pay handsome dividends at Turner Field.

"You're always tweaking your strategies of whether you're drafting high school kids or looking for more immediate help from the college ranks," DeMacio said. "Roy and Paul did an incredible job of keeping the pipeline full of prospects, and I'm looking forward to continuing that trend in the years to come."

At the Winter Meetings last year, DeMacio received a Scout of the Year Award, emblematic of completing his 25th season as a professional scout.



No One Else In The Organization Hits Home Runs The Way **Cody Johnson** Hits Them

# POWER PROJECT

BY ANDY JOHNSTON

**THE STORIES OF HIS POWER** and mammoth home runs have become legendary, even though Cody Johnson only turned 21 years old this past August.

There is his favorite - an extra-inning shot he hit in Asheville, N.C., in 2008 off what he said was a 93-mph fastball. It not only cleared the left-center-field fence, but also a small hill, some trees, and landed in a parking lot.

There's talk of Johnson hammering batting practice pitches over the Myrtle Beach clubhouse, which is beyond the right field fence at BB&T Coastal Field.

And then there is the one lodged in Rocket Wheeler's memory.

"It was one of his best at-bats of the season," said Wheeler, who managed Johnson at Myrtle Beach this past season. "There was a 3-2 count and Cody fouled off a couple of splits and then a couple of fastballs. The (pitcher) came back with another fastball and Cody hit a launch shot (to right-center). It was one of them where you go, 'Wow!' He hit some of the longest home runs, ones that make you go, 'Wow!' "

Stories like that follow Johnson, who has become the top power-hitting prospect in the Braves' organization. That's exactly what they hoped he would do when they selected him in the first round of the 2006 draft (24th player overall).

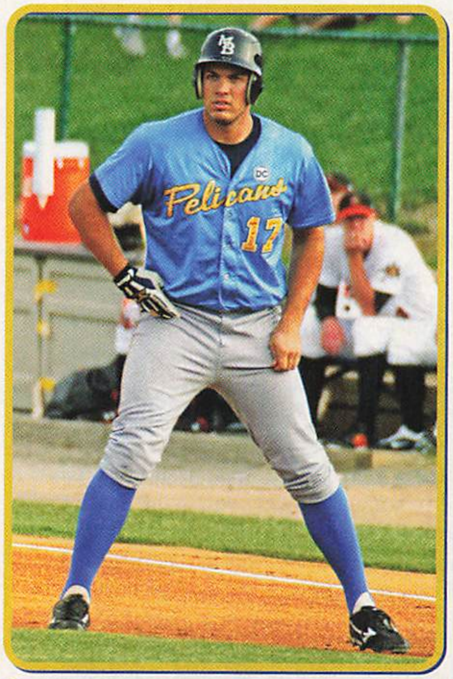
Johnson set a club record by blasting 26 home runs at Rome in 2008, driving in 89 runs in the process. At Myrtle Beach this past summer, Johnson broke the team's home run mark of 23 on July 19 (hitting his 24th in just the 87th game) and finished with 32, becoming the first Carolina League player to hit 30 home runs since 1997.

The 6-foot-4, 240-pound left-handed-hitting leftfielder (throws right) is projected to start the 2010 season at Double-A Mississippi, where he hit .182 in 22 late-season at-bats in 2009.

"I think I was 10 years old the first time I hit a home run, but that was never really a big part of what I was when I was younger," Johnson said. "I was a good hitter, and as I got bigger, I developed more power. I think I hit only one or two home runs my freshman year in high school. But I got bigger and stronger, and by the summer after my freshman year, I was hitting them out of high school fields – normal-sized fields. I came into my own. I knew I had some power."

That's something Al Goetz noticed right away. Johnson was just 16 years old and playing in a summer league in metro Atlanta, and Goetz, a former Braves scout who signed Brian McCann and Jeff Francoeur and who is now an agent with Jet Sports Management, saw Johnson "a ton" for two years.

"He had great power, even as a 16-year-old, and a great feel for the strike zone," Goetz said. "He had a longer swing with a lot of moving parts, but it was pretty, it was pure."



Johnson set club home run records each of the past two seasons, but he needs to reduce his strikeouts, increase his batting average, and improve his fielding to reach the majors.

PHOTOS: RODGER WOOD

Goetz said the Braves were determined to draft Johnson after holding a personal workout with him in April 2006. With Goetz throwing batting practice and former Braves super scout Paul Snyder and cross-checkers looking on, Johnson sent ball after ball soaring out of the stadium at Gulf Coast Community College in Johnson's hometown of Panama City, Fla.

"He put on the best power show with just us watching," Goetz said. "For a half-hour straight, he hit balls as far as I've ever seen balls hit."

**"He has the most power I've ever seen for a young player in 34 years. The most raw power."**

- MYRTLE BEACH MANAGER **ROCKET WHEELER**

After watching Johnson set home run records the past two years, the Braves are now concentrating on harnessing his strength. As is the case with a lot of sluggers, with great power comes a great propensity to strike out. And Johnson has had his share of strikeouts the past two seasons.

He struck out 177 times in 468 at-bats at Rome in '08, driving his average down to .252. This past summer, he struck out 171 times in 422 at-bats and hit only .242.

"He just overswings," Wheeler said. "He's got to know himself and have a game plan, learn to take a walk and not swing at bad pitches. He can be impatient and chase (bad pitches) and strike out. He'll learn that. He wants to hit the ball, so he gets overanxious."

Cutting down his strikeouts has become the No. 1 priority for the Braves and for Johnson.

"I tell him a couple of times every year that hitting one 500 feet isn't worth more than hitting one 410. If it's going out, it's going out," said Kurt Kemp, the Braves' director of player development. "He has the ability to hit it out anywhere in the park. He can go to the opposite field, to the deepest parts of center. If he gets ahold of it, it's going.

"The goal with Cody is that we want him to put his best swing on as many strikes as he can and take as many balls that are thrown. He'll never be a guy who strikes out 50 times a year, but we want him to put 30 or 40 or 50 more balls in play. Hitting requires a mental discipline and a physical discipline. We want him to understand the value of that."

Johnson knows what he needs to do and is working to accomplish that and continue to move up in the organization. He realizes strikeouts always will be a part of what he brings to the plate, but he dedicated this off-season to refining his approach to hitting.

Johnson spent four weeks in the Instructional League this fall, working on his overall game at the Braves' training complex at Disney's Wide World of Sports in

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## AROUND BASEBALL

BY KEN ROSENTHAL

# METS LOOK AMBITIOUS, BUT WILL THEY SCORE?

**THE METS PLANNED** to pursue virtually every big name on the free-agent and trade markets, from Blue Jays ace **Roy Halladay** and Angels righthander **John Lackey** to **Jason Bay** and **Matt Holliday**. Agents and rival executives, however, were skeptical that the Mets actually will land any of those players, believing that the team ultimately will settle for second-tier talent. Free-agent catcher **Bengie Molina** and outfielder **Rick Ankiel** were among the possible fits.

* * *

Once the Cubs traded **Milton Bradley**, they intended to obtain a centerfielder and move **Kosuke Fukudome** back to right field. Free agent **Marlon Byrd**, who thrived under new Cubs hitting coach **Rudy Jaramillo** during their three years together with the Rangers, loomed as a leading possibility.

* * *

How hard did the Giants plan to push for outfielders **Matt Holliday** and **Jason Bay**, the two leading free-agent sluggers? "You've got to be realistic," said the club's general manager, **Brian Sabean**. "If they really want to come to San Francisco... we'll gauge it that way. If they are people who are sincerely interested in San Francisco, we'll be interested." One rival GM estimated that the Giants have only $10 million to spend in 2010, and could settle for less expensive free agents such as first baseman **Nick Johnson** and outfielder **Xavier Nady**.

* * *

The Pirates, more financially flexible than they were last off-season, showed their desire to improve by acquiring second baseman **Akinori Iwamura** from the Tampa Bay Rays for reliever **Jesse Chavez**. Club officials, however, probably will not spend all of the team's available money – they are reluctant to block the ascents of young players while the team rebuilds.

* * *

The Giants and Orioles showed the most early interest in Marlins second baseman **Dan Uggla**, with both teams intending to move him to third base. Uggla, 29, projects to earn approximately $8 million in arbitration, plus the Marlins may need to move him because of his late-season altercation with **Hanley Ramirez**. But in four major-league seasons, he has averaged 30 homers and 90 RBIs.

* * *

The Phillies, looking to upgrade their bullpen, showed preliminary interest in free-agent righthander **Fernando Rodney** (37 saves last years for Detroit). The team also needs to find a third baseman after declining its $5.5 million option on **Pedro Feliz**. Free agents **Mark DeRosa**, the former Brave, and **Adrian Beltre** were among the possible replacements – and it also was possible that Feliz could return at a lower salary.

* * *

The divorce proceedings between Dodgers owner **Frank McCourt** and his wife, **Jamie**, are almost certain to affect the way the team operates. Then again, general manager **Ned Colletti** is accustomed to working under unique financial restrictions. He faced two major issues entering this off-season: Replacing free agent starting pitchers **Randy Wolf** and **Vicente Padilla**, and dealing with the Dodgers' nine arbitration-eligible players.

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

Orlando, Fla. He not only focused on his approach at the plate, but also on his defense and baserunning. He's still learning to play left field after spending his high school career at first base.

"His defense is a work in progress," Kemp said. "He needs to develop consistency in fielding balls and getting better reads off the bat and consistency on making plays on a regular basis. Those will come with improved footwork and better agility. He's working on going back on balls, going to the gap, to the line, and making good decisions in the outfield."

At the plate, Johnson worked specifically with Leon Roberts, the Braves' minor league hitting instructor. They changed where he puts his hands, spread out his stance, and talked about Johnson taking a two-strike approach to the plate.

"I don't care if I hit five home runs next year, I'll cut down on my strikeouts. I want to hit over .300," Johnson said. "I've done it in the past (.305 at Danville in 2007). I want to make more consistent contact and make adjustments. The home runs will be there, but I have to make more consistent solid contact. What I've been doing isn't working, so I've got to get out of my bad habits.

"I can't be afraid to strike out. I can't hit scared, but I know I can't hit home runs every at-bat. I've got to hit the ball hard back up the middle. I've got to feel comfortable when I face lefthanders. I've got to be able to go the other way with a pitch."

Johnson took some time off in late October to hang out at his parents' home in Panama City. He wanted to rest and relax before preparing for spring training and next season by working on his 2006 white Ford F-150 and by playing golf.

Not surprising, a golf ball has little chance against a guy who hits baseballs 450 feet. Johnson's drives routinely travel 350 to 400 yards, he said. That natural power – Johnson said he didn't work out regularly until after his second season in the minors – impressed even a baseball veteran like Wheeler all season.

"He has the most power I've ever seen for a young player in 34 years," Wheeler said. "The most raw power. He can hit it anywhere – right field, right-center, center field, left-center, left field. It's tough to hit the ball out of our park, because the wind blows from right to left, but some of the balls he hit would be upper deck somewhere (else). Maybe upper deck everywhere."

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| | |
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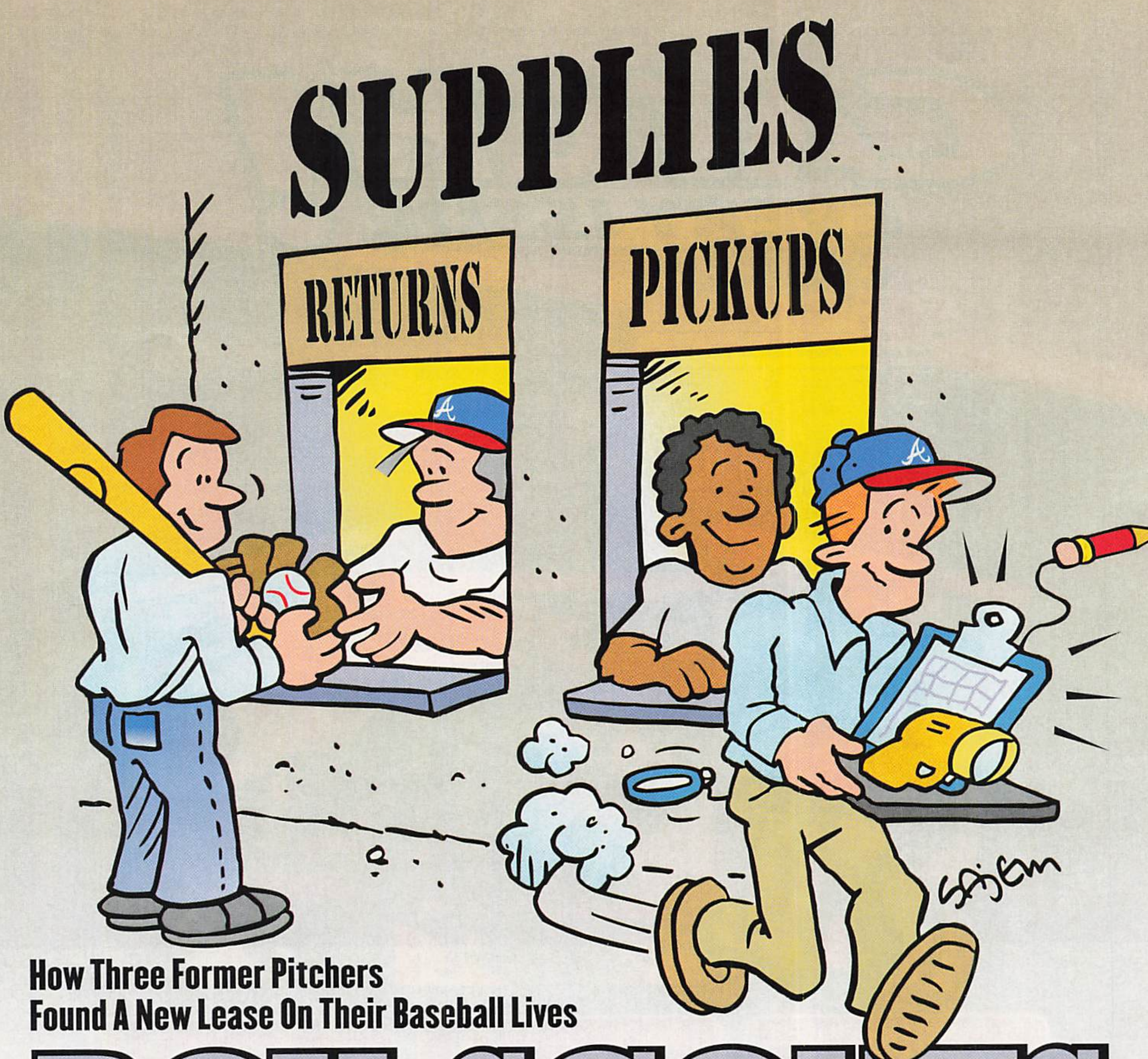
| April 2005 | Starting Rotation |
| May 2005 | Andruw Jones |
| June 2005 | Tim Hudson |
| July 2005 | Kyle Davies |
| August 2005 | Johnson & Langerhans |
| September 2005 | Jeff Francoeur |
| October 2005 | Andruw Jones |
| November 2005 | Brian McCann |
| December 2005 | Andruw Jones |
| January 2006 | Edgar Renteria |
| February 2006 | Niekro, Aaron, Lemaster |
| March 2006 | LaRoche Family |
| April 2006 | Andruw, Smoltz, Chipper |
| May 2006 | Chris Reitsma |
| June 2006 | Francoeur's Slam |
| July 2006 | Edgar Renteria |
| August 2006 | Brian McCann |
| September 2006 | Bob Wickman |
| October 2006 | John Smoltz |
| November 2006 | Bobby Cox |
| December 2006 | Jeff Francoeur |
| January 2007 | Rafael Soriano |
| February 2007 | Spring Training |
| March 2007 | Mike Gonzalez |
| April 2007 | Andruw Jones (Sold Out) |
| May 2007 | Hubbard & Johnson (Sold Out) |
| June 2007 | John Smoltz |
| July 2007 | Diaz & Harris |
| August 2007 | Edgar Renteria |
| September 2007 | Mark Teixeira |
| October 2007 | Jeff Francoeur |
| November 2007 | Chipper Jones |
| December 2007 | John Smoltz |
| January 2008 | Tom Glavine |
| February 2008 | Tim Hudson |
| March 2008 | Mark Kotsay |
| April 2008 | Teixeira & Jones |
| May 2008 | Brian McCann |
| June 2008 | Jair Jurrjens |
| July 2008 | Chipper Jones |
| August 2008 | McCann & Jones |
| September 2008 | Skip Caray |
| October 2008 | Brian McCann |
| November 2008 | Chipper Jones |
| December 2008 | Pete Van Wieren |
| January 2009 | Frank Wren |
| February 2009 | Hank Aaron |
| March 2009 | Derek Lowe |
| April 2009 | Vazquez, Lowe & Kawakami |
| May 2009 | Bobby Cox & Chipper Jones |
| June 2009 | Jeff Francoeur |
| July 2009 | Nate McLouth |
| August 2009 | Tommy Hanson |
| September 2009 | Martin Prado |
| October 2009 | Yunel Escobar |
| November 2009 | Peter Moylan |



### How Three Former Pitchers Found A New Lease On Their Baseball Lives

# BOY SCOUTS

BY JON COOPER

**A SUCCESSFUL PITCHER** never gives in and, when necessary, finds a way to re-invent himself.

That combination of stubbornness and resilience has helped a trio of former Braves right-handed pitching prospects - Kevin Barry, Brett Evert and Carl "Buddy" Hernandez - continue to contribute to the success of the Braves' organization.

The Braves, who signed Evert (1999), Hernandez (2000) and Barry (2001) within three years of one another, re-hired them within a three-month period last winter (Hernandez in September, Evert in October, then Barry in November) as area scouting supervisors.

Recognizing that their playing days were over, the trio traded their caps, gloves and spikes for notebooks, stopwatches, radar guns and laptop computers. Instead of getting hitters out, they're now bringing hitters in (pitchers, too).

"We know they're good people, they're good workers, they're good representatives of this organization," said Kurt Kemp, the Braves' director of player development. "They are guys that you looked at in their playing days and thought, 'This guy might be a good addition to our organization when all is said and done.'"

It was just that the "done" came too soon. Barry, the oldest at 31, Hernandez, 30, and Evert, who turned 29 in October, are at the ages when pitchers usually reach their prime. Instead, they recently finished their rookie year in a new career.

"When you have been playing so long baseball's in your blood and it's hard to get into another job opportunity," said Barry.

Evert was a big (6-foot-6, 240 pounds), powerful kid from Salem, Oregon, who was drafted by the Braves in the seventh round in 1999 and was signed by Kemp. He reached Triple-A Richmond in 2004, but progressed no further and was released. He pitched in the Seattle, Boston and Milwaukee organizations, getting to Triple-A with each of them, but never made the leap to the majors. He retired following 2007, after one season pitching for the Lancaster Barnstormers of the independent Atlantic League.

"Everybody dreams of getting to the major leagues, but it was becoming more and more obvious that that probably wasn't going to happen," said Evert, who finished with a 47-58 career record and a 4.09 ERA. "I wanted to stay in the game, so I started pursuing some options.

"I always felt like I was a Brave at heart," he added. "I was drafted by them, I played with them for five seasons, and I kept in touch with them. An opening became available. I pursued it, and it worked out."

Evert was hired as an area scout for the Colorado Rockies in 2008, and then found his way back to the Braves, for whom he currently handles Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming and parts of Western Canada.

Hernandez didn't have Evert's power or size (5-9, 170), but compensated with superb control and a fiery competitiveness. The Reading, Pa., native, signed with the Braves as an undrafted free agent in 2000 after playing three years of college ball at North Carolina Wesleyan, where he recorded the final outs of the Bishops' 1999 Division III national championship.

Hernandez got as high as Triple-A and nearly made the big club out of spring training in 2005. But arm trouble limited him to 17 games and led to Tommy John surgery. He rehabbed during 2006, but was released after 2007, despite a solid season (9-3, 3.13, 3 saves). After spending 2008 with the Camden Riversharks of the Atlantic League, he found himself at the same crossroads Evert faced the previous year.

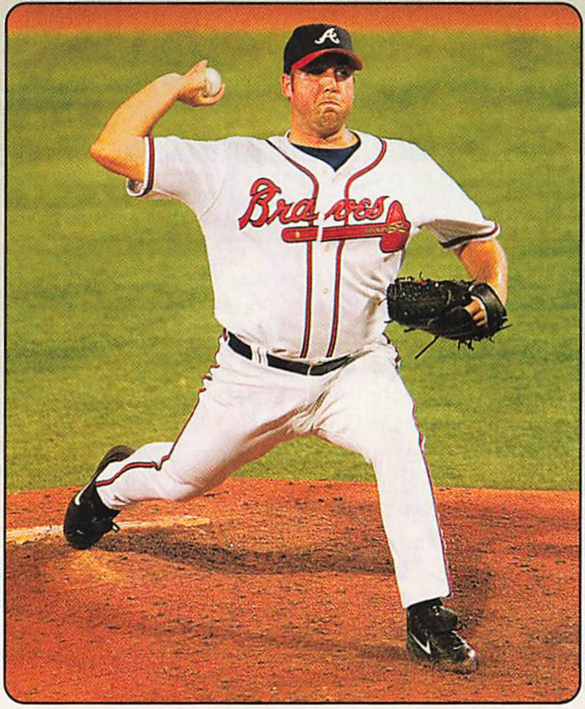
"I needed to make a decision," he recalled. "Did I want to have another off-season and just sit around and wait to find out if some organization wanted to pick me up for the 2009 season - nobody was beating my door down for 2008 - or try and be proactive, make some phone calls, and see what was available in the industry?"

He chose the latter, leaving a message for Roy Clark, then the Braves' director of scouting. Today Hernandez is responsible for sharing duties for covering the prospect hotbed of Florida

"You can't hold a grudge," said Hernandez, who retired with a 25-13 record, 17 saves and a 2.74 ERA. "I had my opportunity. I made the best of my opportunity. I don't regret anything that I did. I was kind of unlucky. I had an injury, but I came back. I proved myself after I came back."

Barry had better luck than Evert or Hernandez, actually making it to the big leagues.

A 14th-round selection (435th overall) of the Braves in the 2001 draft out of Rider University in Lawrenceville, N.J., Barry made his major league debut on June 26, 2006. In front of friends and family at Yankee Stadium, the Princeton, N.J., native threw three scoreless innings. He pitched in 19 more games in the majors, before finishing with a 1-1 record and 6.83 ERA.


PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES

**"When you have been playing so long baseball's in your blood and it's hard to get into another job opportunity."**

Kevin Barry appeared in 20 games for the Braves in 2006-07, working three scoreless innings in his debut June 26, 2006, at Yankee Stadium.

Barry landed a job in the private sector, but soon found himself longing to get back into baseball. He also had kept in touch with the Braves and, when an opportunity presented itself, he took it. He is now area supervisor in the Northeast, where he covers Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and parts of Canada.

Evert, Barry and Hernandez have found that success as a scout requires similar qualities to what made them successful as pitchers.

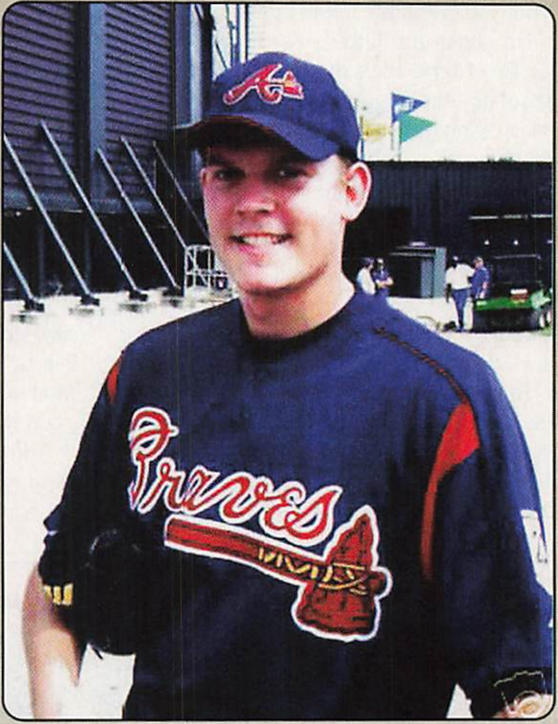
"[Pitching] was self-evaluating, but not really putting it down on paper. You're like, 'Hey, this guy's got a really good curveball' or 'I've got to pitch against this guy tomorrow. How am I going to get him out?'" said Evert. "The toughest transition was taking what you see and putting it down on paper - and then trusting that, trusting yourself.

"You've really got to trust your judgment as to who's a prospect and who's not, and not waste any days. I would say that's the hardest part, not wasting days to where you get to see the guys you need to see."

While the trio only played together for part of the 2004 season at Richmond, they teamed up separately at various stretches. Evert and Hernandez were teammates in 2000 (Jamestown), 2001 (Macon and Myrtle Beach, where they were roommates) and 2002 (Greenville). Barry and Evert were teammates from 2002 through 2004 at Myrtle Beach, Greenville and Richmond, while Hernandez and Barry were team-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

**"Everybody dreams of getting to the major leagues, but it was becoming more and more obvious that that probably wasn't going to happen."**



PHOTOS: SPECIAL

Brett Evert spent 2008 as a scout for the Colorado Rockies before going to work for the Braves, the organization he grew up with after signing as a seventh-round draft pick in 1999.

mates from 2004 through 2007 at Richmond. They remembered talking baseball and about getting to the majors. They just never figured that talk would result in how to get others there instead of themselves.

"When you're playing, you're hoping that you're all going to make it to the big leagues and play in the big leagues together," said Hernandez. "All of us had really good careers and have a good, solid foundation to build our scouting careers upon. We know 'the Braves way.'"

While they primarily serve as the conduit to the next generation's dreamers, they still harbor dreams of their own.

SPECIAL

Buddy Hernandez is off to a good start as a scout, signing four players, including first baseman Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg, who won the batting title in the Appalachian League and was named the league's player of the year.

"There's more than one way to make it to the big leagues," said Hernandez. "If you look at the organization, how many guys started out as an area scout - Dayton [Moore, now general manager of the Kansas City Royals], J.J. [Picollo, an assistant to Clark in Kansas City], Roy [Clark, who just left the Braves to become assistant GM in Washington] - all those guys started out at the bottom."

"One of my goals when I was playing was to get better every year," said Evert. "Same thing with scouting. If I could get better every year, maybe I can be a cross-checker in five, 10 years. Maybe I'll be a general manager some day."

There is a caveat, however. The trio now must not only take into account what's best for the Braves family, but also their own. All three are married. Hernandez and his wife, Katie, have two daughters (ages two and four months), while Barry and his wife, Samantha, have a two-year-old son and are expecting a daughter in February. Evert and wife, Elisa, have put off having children while he establishes his career.

"I have a family that was my main priority," said Hernandez. "I had to put the selfishness away. I played for eight years. I had a good career. This is an opportunity to take a step and start a new phase of my career."

"With family, with travel, it makes things difficult, but my wife has been supportive," said Barry. "She was with me through pro ball. She understands the nature of the beast, as far as being away."

The long drives and the time spent away from family can be a "beast," but there are no regrets.

"I get to go to a ballgame every day," said Hernandez. "It hasn't happened to me yet, but the rewarding part will be when guys I've signed make it to the big leagues."

"For right now, scouting is good," Evert added. "I've got no problem with scouting. It's great. That's why I'm doing it."

## ROUND ONE

**THE ULTIMATE GOAL** of a scout is to get players to the major leagues. For scouts just getting started like Kevin Barry, Brett Evert and Buddy Hernandez, a big feather in the cap is just getting one of your recommended prospects drafted. That's tough, especially for a first-year scout.

Kurt Kemp, the Braves' director of player development, knows just how tough of a task that is, since he faced it himself a decade ago.

"I remember my first year of scouting (1998)," said Kemp. "People can try to tell you what it's going to be like, but there is so much of it you just have to go through and learn on your own. Now those guys have that year under their belt, and I really think they'll start to take off with their ability to scout, because now they know what a full cycle looks like, what a draft looks like, and where the players went that they liked or didn't like. They'll learn an awful lot through this first year and second, third year. They'll really take off and develop into good, young scouts."

Here are the players Hernandez and Barry signed in the 2009 draft, their first as scouts. Evert didn't have any players signed. For the record, Kemp had one player drafted in his first year as a scout ('98), right-handed pitcher Josh Karp, who was taken in the eighth round, but did not sign.

### HERNANDEZ

Mycal Jones, SS (4th round)
Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg, 1B (16th)
Ryan Weber, RHP (22nd)
Bobby Rauh, OF (29th)

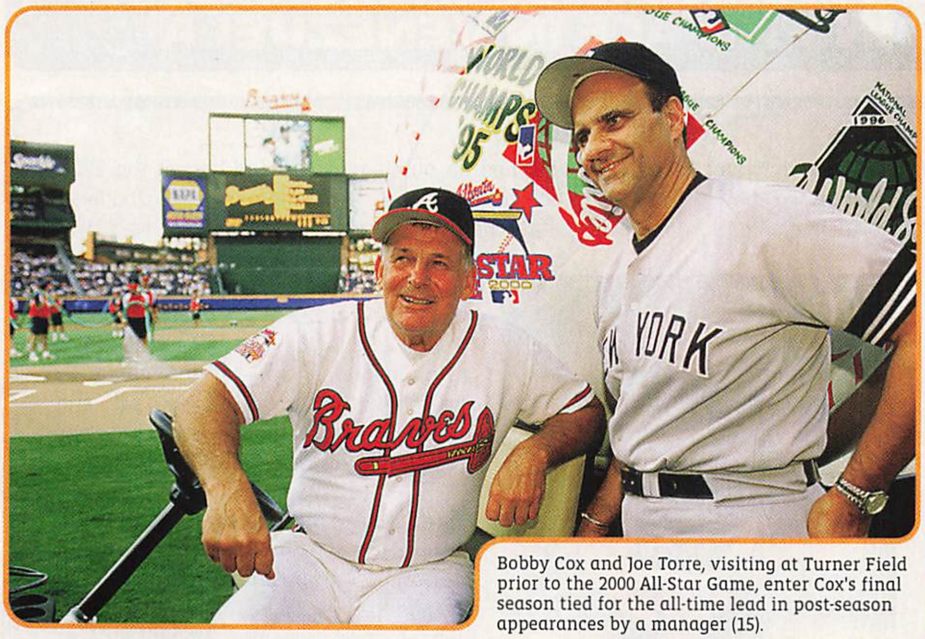
### BARRY

David Hale, RHP (3rd round)
Matt Weaver, SS (9th)
Jamie Hayes, RHP (48th)

- JON COOPER

# BEHIND THE NUMBERS

# OVERCOMING DEFICIENCY IN SPEED



ATLANTA BRAVES

Bobby Cox and Joe Torre, visiting at Turner Field prior to the 2000 All-Star Game, enter Cox's final season tied for the all-time lead in post-season appearances by a manager (15).

BY STEVE FALL

**SPEED IS LESS IMPORTANT** in baseball than it is in most other sports, but it still impacts performance. Fielders with range help pitchers prevent hits, and fast baserunners make it easier to generate runs. The Braves lacked speed this past season – and it showed in the numbers – yet they still fared well at scoring and preventing runs.

Baserunning is hard to quantify, but innovative statistics have made it easier. Baseball Info Solutions calculates a plus/minus statistic that measures positive and negative baserunning plays and compares them to the major league average. This stat takes all baserunning plays into account. For example, it measures how often players advance safely from first base to third on a single, or score from second base on a single. Teams get penalized for having players thrown out or doubled off a base.

The Braves had a minus-26 figure in 2009, according to Baseball Info Solutions. That tied them with the Pirates for 14th in the NL. Only the Astros (-54) ranked lower. The Phillies led the league with a plus-103 figure.

Atlanta's lack of speed showed up in more traditional baserunning categories, as well. The team placed last in the NL in triples (20) and 15th in steals (58). Bobby Cox's club also grounded into the league's third-most doubleplays (142). However, when the Braves did steal bases, they had a solid 69 percent success rate (58-for-84).

The Braves still had a productive offense despite shortcomings on the basepaths. The team placed sixth among the 16 NL clubs in runs scored (735). All of the other top offenses featured strong baserunning. The five teams ahead of Atlanta – Phillies (820 runs), Rockies (804), Brewers (785), Dodgers (780) and Marlins (772) – all had impressive plus/minus baserunning figures.

Speed also impacted the Braves' defensive range. The club ranked 13th in the league with a .687 defensive efficiency figure. That means they converted 68.7 percent of balls put in play against their pitchers into outs. The Dodgers led all teams with a .714 defensive efficiency.

Considering that the defense behind them lacked range, the Braves' pitching staff performed extremely well. Atlanta's 3.57 ERA placed third in the NL. All the other top teams in ERA – the Dodgers (3.41), Giants (3.55), Cardinals (3.66) and Cubs (3.84) – had the benefit of defenses with excellent range. Those four clubs ranked among the top five spots in defense efficiency. This makes the achievements of the 2009 Braves pitchers even more impressive.

* * *

Jason Heyward possesses strike zone judgment rarely seen in a player so young. The Braves' top prospect, who turned 20 years old in August, struck out just 51 times and drew 51 walks in 2009.

Most impressively, Heyward managed to improve his strikeout rate after his promotion from Class-A Myrtle Beach to Double-A Mississippi.

At Myrtle Beach, he struck out 30 times in 214 plate appearances. That works out to 14 percent of his plate appearances. After the promotion to Mississippi, Heyward's strikeout rate dropped to 9.7 percent (19 strikeouts in 195 plate appearances). That's an outstanding percentage for a hitter with power.

The outfielder not only made more contact at Double-A, he also elevated his entire batting production despite facing tougher competition. Heyward had a .296 batting average, .369 on-base percentage and a .519 slugging percentage at Myrtle Beach. He upped those numbers to a .352 average, .446 on-base percentage and .611 slugging with Mississippi.

* * *

The Braves' "magic number" was four last season. When the team scored four or more runs, it went 75-19. That .798 winning percentage in these games easily surpassed the major league average (.722). This further demonstrates the pitching staff's excellence. When given reasonable run support, they made leads stand up.

On the other hand, when the Braves failed to score four runs, they managed only 11 victories versus 57 losses. Their .162 winning percentage fell short of the major league average, which was .193 when scoring less than four runs.

* * *

Bobby Cox will enter his final season needing 87 wins (one more than last season) to reach 2,500 for his career. Only Connie Mack (3,731), John McGraw (2,763) and Tony La Russa (2,552) have ever reached that total. Besides Cox and former Braves manager and player Joe Torre – who needs 254 more victories for 2,500 – this group is unlikely to gain any new members for several years. The next closest active manager, 66-year-old Lou Piniella, has 1,784 wins.

If the Braves reach the post-season in 2010, Cox has a chance to retire as the all-time leader in playoff appearances. He's currently tied with Torre at 15. La Russa has 13.

# FARM ROUNDUP

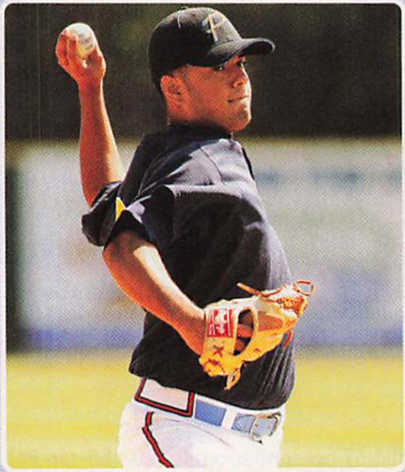
BY **BILL BALLEW**

## YOUNG TEARING IT UP IN MEXICO, ORTEGANO AN ACE IN VENEZUELA

**WHILE THE 2009 MAJOR LEAGUE POST-SEASON** came to an end during the first week of November, professional baseball continued to be played in other parts of the world. In addition to the six Braves in the Arizona Fall League, the Atlanta organization had another 18 players playing in Venezuela, Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

Outfielder Matt Young was putting together one of the more impressive performances during the early stages of winter ball. Playing for Navojoa in the Mexican Pacific League, Young led the league with 10 doubles and 21 walks and was tied for first with 14 extra-base hits and 24 runs scored through the first week of November. That performance came on the heels of a 2009 season in which Young was named the best hustler in the Southern League and ranked among the Double-A league's top five in most hitting categories.

"Matt is a hard-nosed baseball player who works his rear-end off," said Kurt Kemp, the Braves' director of player development. "He's playing internationally for the first time this winter after spending some time in the past in the Arizona Fall League, and he's making the most of the opportunity. He's a guy who plays the game the right way every time he takes the field."


TOM PRIDDY

Jose Ortegano, who signed at age 16, has worked his way from the Dominican Summer League to Double A, and at age 22 is one of the Braves' better lefty prospects.

The Braves also have a top performer in the Venezuelan Winter League in left-handed pitcher Jose Ortegano. The southpaw, who had an outstanding second half of the 2009 season at advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach and Double-A Mississippi, has carried his momentum back to his native country. Through Nov. 8, Ortegano had made five starts, owned a 2-1 record with a 3.18 ERA, and allowed only 16 hits in his first 22 2/3 innings. His ERA ranked third in the league, and he led the league by limiting hitters to a .203 average and posting a WHIP (walks plus hits per inning) of 0.93.

**Here's a list of Braves playing winter ball:**

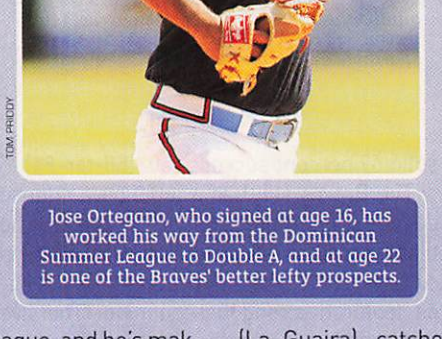
**Dominican Republic:** Second basemen Yoel Campusano (Aguilas), Diory Hernandez (Escogido) and Antonio Perez (Cibao), third baseman Donell Linares (Escogido), and pitchers Juan Perez (Cibao) and Luis Valdez (Este).

**Mexico:** Outfielders Concepcion Rodriguez (Navojoa) and Matt Young (Navojoa) and pitchers Brett Butts (Navojoa), Tim Gustafson (Navojoa) and Edgar Osuna (Mazatlan).

**Venezuela:** Outfielder Gregor Blanco (La Guaira), catchers J.C. Boscan (Margarita) and Osman Narval (Zulia), first baseman Ernesto Mejia (Zulia), and pitchers Luis Avilan (Lara), Moises Hernandez (Lara) and Jose Ortegano (Caracas). Atlanta bullpen coach Eddie Perez is managing Zulia again.

## FALL LEAGUE UPDATE

As the Arizona Fall League reached the stretch drive of its season, it held its Rising Stars Game on Nov. 7. Left-handed pitcher Mike Minor, the Braves' first-round draft pick last June out of Vanderbilt, received the starting assignment for the West. Minor ran into a streak of misfortune prior to giving up a three-run homer to Brandon Allen. He departed after only two-thirds of an inning, allowing seven hits, seven runs (six earned) and a walk. Despite Minor's difficulties, the West rallied and defeated the East, 8-7. Shortstop Brandon Hicks played the second half of the game, and right-handed pitcher Craig Kimbrel recorded the last three outs to earn the save.


TOM PRIDDY

Shortstop Brandon Hicks, the Braves' third-round draft pick in 2007, is playing well in the Arizona Fall League, where he helped the West win the Rising Stars Game.

The all-star game outing notwithstanding, Minor has continued to show in Arizona why the Braves used the seventh overall selection in the draft to acquire him. After pitching four times at the end of the regular season at Rome, Minor owned a 1-0 record and a 2.31 ERA through five starts with the Peoria Saguaros. He has looked sharp while facing advanced hitters by showing a four-pitch repertoire, headed by an excellent changeup and a fastball with impressive movement.

The Saguaros also featured the pitching services of Kimbrel, Lee Hyde and Jeff Lyman, and all three of the Braves pitchers performed well in the hitting-dominated league. First baseman Freddie Freeman had 12 hits, including four for extra bases, and five RBIs in his first 11 games. Hicks has also played well, batting .293 in his first 15 games.

"We're very pleased with the progress Brandon is making," Kemp said. "He's made some mechanical adjustments at the plate, particularly with his swing, and it's starting to pay dividends. He worked hard with (minor league hitting coordinator) Leon Roberts, and we feel like he's headed in a great direction."

## ORGANIZATIONAL NOTES

* Left-handed pitcher **Brett DeVall**, the Braves' first pick in the 2008 draft, underwent arthroscopic elbow surgery after making three strong appearances during Instructional League in Florida. DeVall, who has been bothered by tightness in his forearm since signing with Atlanta, visited noted surgeon Dr. James Andrews in Birmingham, Ala., who recommended the procedure. DeVall is expected to be ready to pitch at the start of spring training.

* Danville first baseman **Riaan Spanjer-Furstenburg** was named winner of the George M. Trautman Award as the Topps Appalachian League Player of the Year. The Topps Company of New York, in conjunction with Minor League Baseball, presents the Trautman Award to one player in each of the 16 minor leagues. Spanjer-Furstenburg won the Appy League batting title with a .359 average and led the league with 84 hits while placing third in on-base percentage (.411), RBIs (53) and doubles (19) and finishing fourth in extra-base hits (27).

* The Braves hired **Dave Wallace** as minor league pitching coordinator. Considered one of the premier pitching coaches in the game, Wallace has been instrumental in the development of such hurlers as Orel Hershiser, Pedro Martinez and John Wetteland. He spent the past two years with Seattle, working as an assistant to the general manager in 2008 and minor league pitching coordinator in 2009. Wallace replaces **Kent Willis**, who accepted a reassignment within the organization. The Braves will announce their minor league staffs for 2010 by the winter meetings in December.

* One of the first moves made by new scouting director **Tony DeMacio** was the hiring of **Deron Romblach** from the Baltimore Orioles. Romblach was the Midwest cross-checker for Baltimore and will hold a similar position with the Braves.

## DOWN ON THE FARM

ADAM MILLIGAN

# I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THE HIGHER LEVELS

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

A sixth-round draft pick in 2008 from Tennessee, Adam Milligan emerged as one of the Braves' top prospects this past summer, his first pro season on the field. At Danville, Rome and Myrtle Beach, the 6-foot-3, 230-pound outfielder (bats L, throws R) hit a combined .344 with 13 home runs and 49 RBIs in only 67 games. Milligan, 21, actually was drafted three times, all by Atlanta (28th round in 2006, 27th round in '07).

**I'M HAPPY** with the way my first year went. I was trying to get used to everything, but moving up to higher levels was a great experience.

After that, I went to Instructional League and spent a lot of individual time with the hitting coaches. I also worked with Lynn Jones, our outfield instructor, and he really helped me with positioning, taking the right angles to the ball, and improving my throwing mechanics. Now my goal is to take everything I've learned and pick up where I left off.

Right before the 2008 draft, I pulled the ACL, hamstring and meniscus in my knee. I had spoken with several teams, particularly the Braves, and I was excited about getting everything started. Once the injury happened, I couldn't have been more disappointed.

It created some stress, because I didn't know how the knee might affect my draft status. I tried to stay positive and make the best of the situation, but it definitely wasn't the way I wanted to start my pro career. As it turned out, I couldn't have asked for a better team to go to.

In high school, I played all three sports - baseball, basketball and football - and I never really had time to focus on one. I also signed to attend Austin Peay University to play baseball and football before the Braves drafted me the first time, in 2006. I spoke with them quite a bit and decided to go to junior college. I gave up football because I saw more of a future in baseball.

"IT WAS KIND OF LIKE BOOT CAMP FOR BASEBALL, BUT IT PUT ME IN THE RIGHT FRAME OF MIND."

I spent two years at Walters State (Tenn.) and got into the rhythm of playing one sport the entire year. I also matured a lot during my time there, which improved my game, as well.

After I rehabbed my knee from June through November last year, I really wanted to start playing in games. I began the season in extended spring training, which was a little frustrating, but it turned out to be the right move. Getting extra at-bats and experience in extended really helped me. It was kind of like boot camp for baseball, but it put me in the right frame of mind.

I spent two weeks in Danville in June and felt great. I saw the ball very well and made good contact, which led to a promotion to Rome. I was pleased with the adjustments I made at every level, and the higher you go, the pitchers are smarter and older and better.

Myrtle Beach was definitely a big step, but I feel like I learned a lot. The key is knowing the situation and what your team needs you to do during every at-bat.

I worked on my defense a lot this year in Instructional League. I played center field growing up, and then played a lot of left field this past season before seeing some time in right field during instructs.

Coming from college, where they use metal bats, I'm still working on getting the proper reads off wood bats. For the most part, the fields are bigger in pro ball, and if you don't get a good jump, you're going to have trouble.

It was a great year, and now I want to build on it and see what the game has to offer at the highest levels.

# 2010 FARM SCHEDULES

## GWINNETT BRAVES

International League
Triple A

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### APRIL

| | |
|---|---|
| 8-11 | Charlotte |
| 12-14 | Durham |
| 15-18 | at Charlotte |
| 19-22 | at Norfolk |
| 23-26 | at Durham |
| 27-30 | Norfolk |

### MAY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-4 | Pawtucket |
| 6-9 | at Syracuse |
| 10-13 | at Pawtucket |
| 14-17 | Lehigh Valley |
| 18-21 | Columbus |
| 22-25 | at Indianapolis |
| 27-30 | at Louisville |
| 31 | Indianapolis |

### JUNE

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-3 | Indianapolis |
| 4-7 | Scranton/Wilkes-Barre |
| 8-11 | at Norfolk |
| 12-13 | at Durham |
| 14-15 | Durham |
| 17-20 | Syracuse |
| 21-24 | Buffalo |
| 25-28 | at Columbus |
| 29-30 | at Toledo |

### JULY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | at Toledo |
| 3-5 | at Durham |
| 6-7 | Norfolk |
| 8-11 | Charlotte |
| 12-14 | All-Star Break |
| 15-18 | at Buffalo |
| 19-22 | at Scranton/Wilkes-Barre |
| 23-26 | Louisville |
| 27-30 | Rochester |
| 31 | Toledo |

### AUGUST

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-3 | Toledo |
| 5-8 | at Lehigh Valley |
| 9-12 | at Rochester |
| 13-15 | Durham |
| 16-17 | Norfolk |
| 19-22 | at Charlotte |
| 23-25 | Charlotte |
| 26-29 | Durham |
| 30 | Norfolk |
| 31 | at Norfolk |

### SEPTEMBER

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | at Norfolk |
| 2-3 | at Durham |
| 4-6 | at Charlotte |

## MISSISSIPPI BRAVES

Southern League
Double A

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### APRIL

| | |
|---|---|
| 8-12 | Tennessee |
| 14-18 | at West Tenn |
| 19-23 | Mobile |
| 24-28 | at Montgomery |
| 29-30 | at Jacksonville |

### MAY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-3 | at Jacksonville |
| 5-9 | Birmingham |
| 10-14 | at Chattanooga |
| 15-19 | West Tenn |
| 20-24 | Huntsville |
| 26-30 | at Mobile |
| 31 | Montgomery |

### JUNE

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-4 | Montgomery |
| 5-9 | at West Tenn |
| 11-15 | Chattanooga |
| 16-20 | at Carolina |
| 22-27 | Mobile |
| 28-30 | at Birmingham |

### JULY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-3 | at Birmingham |
| 4-6 | West Tenn |
| 7-10 | Birmingham |
| 11-13 | All-Star Break |
| 14-16 | at Huntsville |
| 17-20 | at Mobile |
| 22-26 | Tennessee |
| 28-31 | at Huntsville |

### AUGUST

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | at Huntsville |
| 2-6 | Mobile |
| 7-11 | at Birmingham |
| 12-16 | Montgomery |
| 18-22 | at Tennessee |
| 23-25 | Jacksonville |
| 27-30 | Carolina |
| 31 | at West Tenn |

### SEPTEMBER

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | at West Tenn |
| 3-6 | at Birmingham |

## MYRTLE BEACH PELICANS

Carolina League
Advanced Class A

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### APRIL

| | |
|---|---|
| 8-11 | Wilmington |
| 13-15 | at Frederick |
| 16-18 | at Salem |
| 19-22 | Winston-Salem |
| 23-25 | at Kinston |
| 27-29 | Potomac |
| 30 | Frederick |

### MAY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | Frederick |
| 3-6 | at Potomac |
| 7-9 | at Lynchburg |
| 10-13 | Kinston |
| 14-16 | Salem |
| 17-20 | at Winston-Salem |
| 21-23 | at Wilmington |
| 25-27 | Lynchburg |
| 28-May 30 | Wilmington |
| 31 | at Frederick |

### JUNE

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | at Frederick |
| 3-6 | at Salem |
| 7-9 | Winston-Salem |
| 10-13 | at Kinston |
| 15-17 | Potomac |
| 18-20 | Frederick |
| 22 | Carolina League-California League All-Star Game at Myrtle Beach |
| 24-26 | at Potomac |
| 27-29 | at Lynchburg |
| 30 | Kinston |

### JULY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | Kinston |
| 3-6 | Salem |
| 7-9 | at Winston-Salem |
| 10-12 | at Wilmington |
| 14-17 | Lynchburg |
| 19-21 | Wilmington |
| 22-25 | at Frederick |
| 26-28 | at Salem |
| 29-31 | Winston-Salem |

### AUGUST

| | |
|---|---|
| 2-4 | at Kinston |
| 5-8 | Potomac |
| 9-12 | Frederick |
| 13-15 | at Salem |
| 16-19 | at Lynchburg |
| 20-22 | Kinston |
| 24-26 | Salem |
| 27-29 | at Winston-Salem |
| 30-31 | at Wilmington |

### SEPTEMBER

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | at Wilmington |
| 4-6 | Lynchburg |

## ROME BRAVES

South Atlantic League
Class A

STATE MUTUAL STADIUM
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### APRIL

| | |
|---|---|
| 8-11 | at Kannapolis |
| 12-15 | at Greenville |
| 16-19 | Savannah |
| 20-23 | Kannapolis |
| 24-27 | at Charleston |
| 28-30 | at Greensboro |

### MAY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | at Greensboro |
| 3-6 | Hagerstown |
| 7-10 | Asheville |
| 12-15 | at Savannah |
| 16-19 | Charleston |
| 20-23 | at Hickory |
| 24-27 | at Augusta |
| 28-31 | Savannah |

### JUNE

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-4 | Augusta |
| 5-8 | at Charleston |
| 10-12 | Greenville |
| 14-16 | at Savannah |
| 17-20 | Charleston |
| 21-23 | All-Star Break |
| 24-28 | at Lexington |
| 29-30 | Greensboro |

### JULY

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-3 | Greensboro |
| 4-7 | at Savannah |
| 8-12 | Charleston |
| 14-18 | at Hagerstown |
| 20-23 | Lexington |
| 24-27 | Greenville |
| 29-31 | at Asheville |

### AUGUST

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | at Asheville |
| 2-5 | Savannah |
| 6-10 | at Greenville |
| 12-16 | Augusta |
| 17-20 | at Charleston |
| 21-24 | West Virginia |
| 25-28 | Greensboro |
| 29-31 | at West Virginia |

### SEPTEMBER

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | at West Virginia |
| 3-6 | at Lexington |

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6
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17

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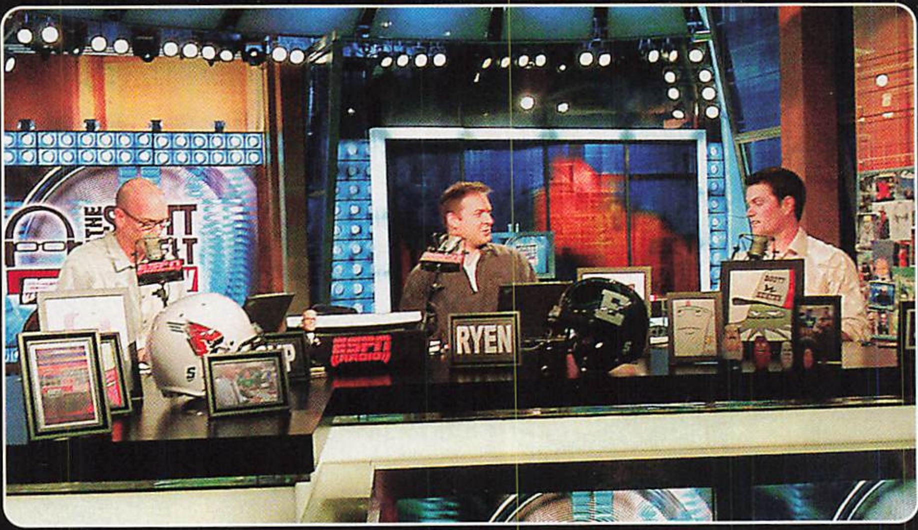
# TALKING BASEBALL

## Matt Diaz Gets A Taste Of Media Work With Post-Season Stint On ESPN

BY MARK BOWMAN
OF MLB.COM



ESPN

Matt Diaz (R), doing some work on ESPN Radio during the baseball playoffs, initially became interested in sports broadcasting when he was a boy and met legendary Detroit Tigers broadcaster Ernie Harwell during spring training.

**WHILE EVALUATING HIS CAREER** path during his days at Florida State University, Matt Diaz took advantage of the opportunity to ask the great Ernie Harwell what he should do to prepare for a possible entry into the broadcasting world.

"He told me to just keep on hitting and not to worry about broadcasting until I couldn't do that any more," Diaz said.

As Braves fans are happy to confirm, Diaz certainly hasn't stopped hitting. Still, to at least confirm that he may want to get a taste of what Harwell did for 55 years, the 31-year-old outfielder spent a week in October allowing ESPN to introduce him to the electronic media world.

Diaz will continue serving as a guest analyst for the talk show "First Take," but ESPN also provided him the chance to do a live chat and appear on Scott Van Pelt's radio show.

"I really never thought about having to put on makeup," said the always-witty Diaz. "But truthfully, it's been a great experience. You certainly learn a lot about what happens on this side of the business."

With his father serving as the spring training chaplain for the Detroit Tigers, Diaz had the opportunity at a very young age to be introduced to Harwell.

After interacting with Harwell before and during his broadcasts of Tigers games, Diaz started thinking about how he could remain in the baseball world if he had to end his aspirations to be a major league player.

"I used to think, 'If I can't make it in sports, then I'd like to talk about it,' " he said.

Having hit .316 with an .829 OPS (on-base percentage plus slugging percentage) over the past four seasons for the Braves, Diaz isn't in a position where he immediately has to decide which aspect of the broadcasting world he'd like to tackle.

But over the course of the week in October, he gained an appreciation for how quickly writers, broadcasters and analysts have to alter their mind-sets.

As Game 3 of the National League Championship Series was nearing its end on the night of Oct.18, Diaz was fully prepared to go on "First Take" the following morning to talk about how the Dodgers had regained momentum in this best-of-seven series.

Then, after the Phillies completed one of those late-inning comebacks that have proven to be all-too-familiar to Braves fans and players, Diaz quickly found himself talking to the show's producers about analyzing the consequences of the two-out, ninth-inning double that Jimmy Rollins recorded to provide the Phillies a 3-1 advantage in the series.

"With one swing of the bat, Rollins changed our whole segment," Diaz said. "That was an eye-opener. That's just something I've never thought about while playing."

If Diaz does become a member of the media once his playing days are complete, he'll likely be more comfortable providing some of the opinions he withheld during his week on ESPN.

When doing Van Pelt's show on Oct. 21, he was careful with his response to questions about the umpiring mistakes that affected the Angels and Yankees during Game 4 of the American League Championship Series the previous night.

"While I have strong opinions about a lot of things, I'm not going to freely express them right now," he said. "I still have to face some of these guys and work with some of these umpires."

# TiCKETiNG

*TO PURCHASE TICKETS OR FOR TICKET INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com*

## INDIVIDUAL GAME TICKETS

No information was available at press time. Visit braves.com and watch future issues of ChopTalk for information as it is released.

## SEASON TICKET PLANS

The following ticket plans are on sale. Purchase tickets before Dec. 18 to receive 2009 prices. For more information, visit braves.com or call (404) 577-9100.

### FULL SEASON (83 Games)

| Level | Price | Savings | % Off Gate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Henry Aaron Seats | $4,980 | $1,270 | 20 |
| Dugout | $4,316 | $1,104 | 20 |
| Golden Moon* | $3,154 | $606 | 16 |
| Field | $2,490 | $772 | 24 |
| Terrace | $2,490 | $606 | 20 |
| Club Pavilion | $1,079 | $1,353 | 56 |
| Field Reserved | $996 | $1,436 | 59 |
| Terrace Reserved | $996 | $1,104 | 53 |
| Outfield | $996 | $1,104 | 53 |
| Upper Box | $830 | $274 | 25 |
| Upper Box (Rows 11+) | $498 | $606 | 55 |
| Upper Pavilion | $249 | $303 | 55 |

* Fans in Golden Moon Casino level receive complimentary 755 Club membership and $10 in food/beverage credit in the Club per ticket at each game.

### HALF SEASON (42 Games+)

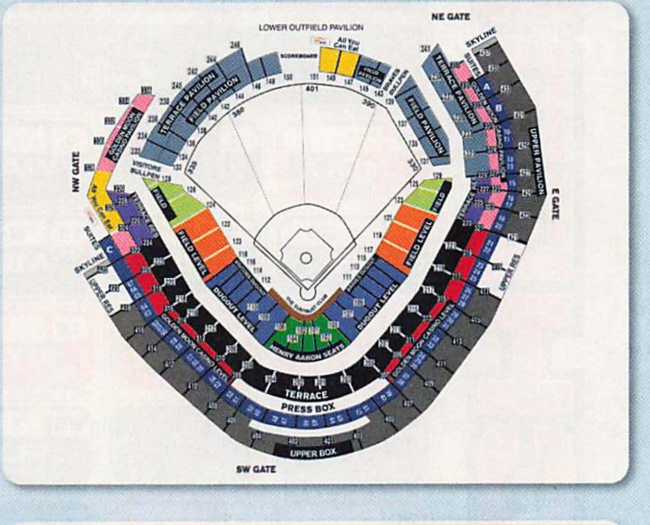
| Level | Price | Savings | % Off Gate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Golden Moon* | $1,764 | $192 | 10 |
| Field | $1,344 | $360 | 21 |
| Outfield | $714 | $402 | 36 |
| Upper Box | $462 | $150 | 25 |

+ Includes Opening Day, all Friday and Saturday games, and at least one game against all opponents.
* Fans in Golden Moon Casino level receive complimentary 755 Club membership and $10 in food/beverage credit in the Club per ticket at each game.

### WEEKENDS (30 Games+)

| Level | Price | Savings | % Off Gate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Golden Moon* | $1,260 | $116 | 8 |
| Field | $960 | $236 | 20 |
| Outfield | $510 | $274 | 35 |
| Upper Box | $330 | $94 | 22 |

+ Includes Opening Day and all Saturday and Sunday games.
* Fans in Golden Moon Casino level receive complimentary 755 Club membership and $10 in food/beverage credit in the Club per ticket at each game.


LOWER OUTFIELD PAVILION
NE GATE
All You Can Eat
SCOREBOARD
TERRACE PAVILION
FIELD PAVILION
BRAVES BULLPEN
VISITORS BULLPEN
SKYLINE
SUITES
GOLDEN MOON CASINO PAVILION
UPPER PAVILION
NW GATE
E GATE
FIELD
FIELD LEVEL
TERRACE RES
DUGOUT LEVEL
HENRY AARON SEATS
GOLDEN MOON CASINO LEVEL
UPPER RES
TERRACE
PRESS BOX
UPPER BOX
SW GATE

### 20-GAMES

DALE MURPHY PLAN
(Variety of Tuesday games and all Fridays)

BOBBY COX PLAN
(Variety of Wednesday games and all Saturdays)

PHIL NIEKRO PLAN
(Variety of Thursdays and all Sundays)

WARREN SPAHN PLAN
(Only weekday games and all day games)

| Level | Price | Savings | % Off Gate |
|---|---|---|---|
| Golden Moon* | $840 | $92 | 10 |
| Field | $640 | $172 | 21 |

* Fans in Golden Moon Casino level receive complimentary 755 Club membership and $10 in food/beverage credit in the Club per ticket at each game.

# 2010 SCHEDULE

🟥 **HOME**
🟦 **AWAY**

SCHEDULE IS TENTATIVE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
GAME TIMES AND BROADCAST INFORMATION TO BE DETERMINED.

## APRIL

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 🟥 CHI AL EXHIBITION | 3 🟥 CHI AL EXHIBITION |
| 4 | 5 🟥 CHC | 6 | 7 🟥 CHC | 8 🟥 CHC | 9 4:35 🟦 SF | 10 🟦 SF |
| 11 4:05 🟦 SF | 12 6:35 🟦 SD | 13 | 14 10:05 🟦 SD | 15 6:35 🟦 SD | 16 🟥 COL | 17 🟥 COL |
| 18 🟥 COL | 19 | 20 🟥 PHI | 21 🟥 PHI | 22 🟥 PHI | 23 7:10 🟦 NYM | 24 1:10 🟦 NYM |
| 25 1:10 🟦 NYM | 26 8:15 🟦 STL | 27 8:15 🟦 STL | 28 8:15 🟦 STL | 29 1:40 🟦 STL | 30 🟥 HOU | |

## MAY

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 1 🟥 HOU |
| 2 🟥 HOU | 3 | 4 🟦 WAS | 5 🟦 WAS | 6 🟦 WAS | 7 7:05 🟦 PHI | 8 7:05 🟦 PHI |
| 9 1:35 🟦 PHI | 10 8:10 🟦 MIL | 11 8:10 🟦 MIL | 12 1:10 🟦 MIL | 13 | 14 🟥 ARI | 15 🟥 ARI |
| 16 🟥 ARI | 17 🟥 NYM | 18 🟥 NYM | 19 🟥 CIN | 20 🟥 CIN | 21 🟦 PIT | 22 🟦 PIT |
| 23 🟦 PIT | 24 | 25 7:10 🟦 FLA | 26 7:10 🟦 FLA | 27 7:10 🟦 FLA | 28 🟥 PIT | 29 🟥 PIT |
| 30 🟥 PIT | 31 🟥 PHI | | | | | |

## JUNE

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 🟥 PHI | 2 🟥 PHI | 3 🟦 LA | 4 🟦 LA | 5 🟦 LA |
| 6 🟦 LA | 7 9:40 🟦 ARI | 8 9:40 🟦 ARI | 9 9:40 🟦 ARI | 10 3:40 🟦 ARI | 11 8:10 🟦 MIN | 12 7:10 🟦 MIN |
| 13 2:10 🟦 MIN | 14 | 15 🟥 TAM | 16 🟥 TAM | 17 🟥 TAM | 18 🟥 KC | 19 🟥 KC |
| 20 🟥 KC | 21 | 22 🟦 CHI AL | 23 🟦 CHI AL | 24 🟦 CHI AL | 25 🟥 DET | 26 🟥 DET |
| 27 🟥 DET | 28 🟥 WAS | 29 🟥 WAS | 30 🟥 WAS | | | |

# 2010 SCHEDULE

## JULY

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 🟥 FLA | 3 🟥 FLA |
| 4 🟥 FLA | 5 7:05 🟦 PHI | 6 7:05 🟦 PHI | 7 7:05 🟦 PHI | 8 | 9 7:10 🟦 NY | 10 7:10 🟦 NY |
| 11 1:10 🟦 NY | 12 | 13 ALL-STAR GAME ANAHEIM | 14 | 15 🟥 MIL | 16 🟥 MIL | 17 🟥 MIL |
| 18 🟥 MIL | 19 | 20 🟥 SD | 21 🟥 SD | 22 🟥 SD | 23 7:10 🟦 FLA | 24 7:10 🟦 FLA |
| 25 1:10 🟦 FLA | 26 | 27 🟦 WAS | 28 🟦 WAS | 29 🟦 WAS | 30 🟦 CIN | 31 🟦 CIN |

## AUGUST

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 🟦 CIN | 2 🟥 NYM | 3 🟥 NYM | 4 🟥 NYM | 5 🟥 SF | 6 🟥 SF | 7 🟥 SF |
| 8 🟥 SF | 9 8:05 🟦 HOU | 10 8:05 🟦 HOU | 11 2:05 🟦 HOU | 12 | 13 🟥 LA | 14 🟥 LA |
| 15 🟥 LA | 16 🟥 LA | 17 🟥 WAS | 18 🟥 WAS | 19 🟥 WAS | 20 🟦 CHC | 21 🟦 CHC |
| 22 🟦 CHC | 23 🟦 COL | 24 🟦 COL | 25 🟦 COL | 26 | 27 🟥 FLA | 28 🟥 FLA |
| 29 🟥 FLA | 30 🟥 NYM | 31 🟥 NYM | | | | |

## SEPT./OCT.

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 1 🟥 NYM | 2 🟥 NYM | 3 7:10 🟦 FLA | 4 7:10 🟦 FLA |
| 5 1:10 🟦 FLA | 6 🟦 PIT | 7 🟦 PIT | 8 🟦 PIT | 9 🟥 STL | 10 🟥 STL | 11 🟥 STL |
| 12 🟥 STL | 13 🟥 WAS | 14 🟥 WAS | 15 🟥 WAS | 16 | 17 7:10 🟦 NYM | 18 1:10 🟦 NYM |
| 19 1:10 🟦 NYM | 20 7:05 🟦 PHI | 21 7:05 🟦 PHI | 22 7:05 🟦 PHI | 23 | 24 🟦 WAS | 25 🟦 WAS |
| 26 🟦 WAS | 27 🟥 FLA | 28 🟥 FLA | 29 🟥 FLA | 30 | 1 🟥 PHI | 2 🟥 PHI |
| 3 🟥 PHI | | | | | | |

🟥 HOME

🟦 AWAY

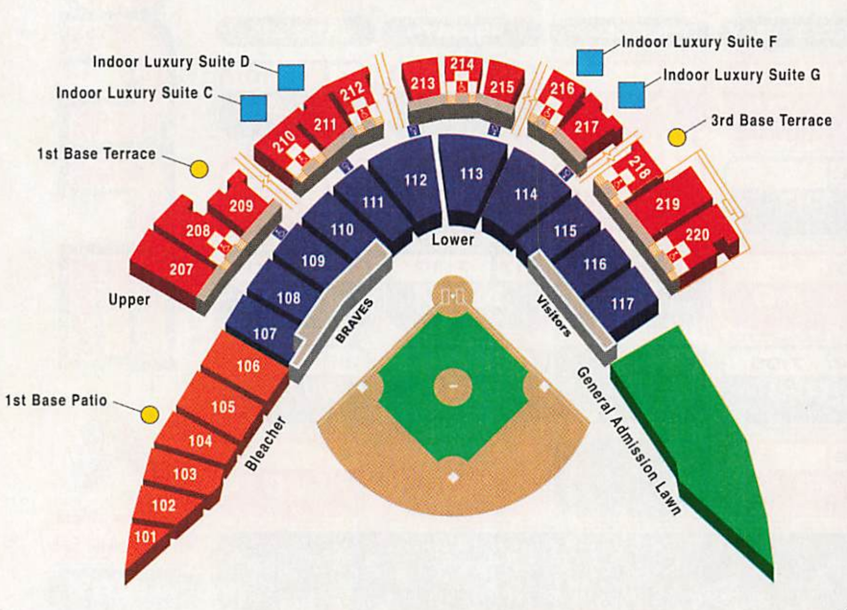
# 2010 SPRING TRAINING

## MARCH HOME

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 1:05<br>NYM | 4 1:05<br>PIT | 5 1:05<br>WAS | 6 |
| 7 1:05<br>HOU | 8 | 9 7:05<br>PHI | 10 1:05<br>NYM | 11 | 12 1:05<br>PIT | 13 1:05<br>TOR |
| 14 | 15 | 16 1:05<br>FLA | 17 | 18 | 19 6:05<br>DET | 20 |
| 21 1:05<br>STL | 22 | 23 | 24 1:05<br>PHI | 25 | 26 1:05<br>DET | 27 1:05<br>WAS |
| 28 | 29 | 30 1:05<br>NYY | 31 1:05<br>HOU | •Games shown are all at Champion Stadium, ESPN Wide World of Sports in Kissimmee, Fla.<br>•Away schedule was not available at press time.<br>•Broadcast details to be announced. |  |  |

Dates, times and opponents are subject to change.

### CHAMPION STADIUM AT ESPN WIDE WORLD OF SPORTS SEATING DIAGRAM


Indoor Luxury Suite D
Indoor Luxury Suite C
1st Base Terrace
Indoor Luxury Suite F
Indoor Luxury Suite G
3rd Base Terrace
214
213
215
212
216
211
217
210
218
209
219
208
220
207
Upper
112
113
111
114
110
115
109
Lower
116
108
117
107
BRAVES
Visitors
106
105
104
103
102
101
1st Base Patio
Bleacher
General Admission Lawn

## INDIVIDUAL TICKETS*

Single game tickets go on sale Saturday, Jan. 9, via Ticketmaster.com and at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex Box Office.

$28-$39 - Lower Level Reserved
$24-$33 - Upper Level Reserved
$24-$33 - Bleacher Level Reserved
$15-$19 - General Admission Lawn

* Individual game ticket prices vary by game day and opponent.

## GROUP TICKETS

Groups of 10 or more should call (407) 939-GAME (4263) as soon as possible to reserve the best possible seat location and to avoid sellouts.

## ON-FIELD SPECTATOR EXPERIENCE

### PRICE - $80 PER PERSON

Exclusive pre-game On-Field Spectator Experience allows fans on the field behind home plate to watch the Braves and their opponents warm up. Limited availability. Warmups run from 10:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for games starting at 1:05 p.m., and from 4:15 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. for games starting at 7:05 p.m. Batting practice times are subject to change without notice.

## SEASON TICKETS*

### $400 - LOWER LEVEL RESERVED
### $320 - UPPER LEVEL/BLEACHER RESERVED

Includes:
* 16 Games vs. opponents including the World Champion Yankees (Mar. 30) and the National League champion Phillies (Mar. 9 & 24).

* Invitation to an exclusive event at ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex with Atlanta Braves players.

* Opportunity to purchase additional single game tickets before they go on sale to the public.

* General admission pass valid for Atlanta Braves practice sessions, excluding game days (valid Feb. 14-April 1).

* Preferred parking option (subject to availability) - $80 for spring training season.

* Exclusive season ticket holder stadium entrance.

* Complimentary annual golf membership at Walt Disney World Courses.

## SUITES AND HOSPITALITY

Groups ranging in size from 15 to 300 fans can rent a variety of indoor and outdoor locations, ranging from Climate-Controlled Indoor Luxury Suites (15 to 40 fans) to Open Air Suites (40 fans) and Tented Patio with Stadium Seating (150 to 300 fans). Call (407) 939-GAME (4263) for information.

## MINI PLANS

### 6 GAMES - $170

| | |
|---|---|
| Sunday, Mar. 7 | Astros |
| Tuesday, Mar. 9 | Phillies |
| Saturday, Mar. 13 | Blue Jays |
| Friday, Mar. 19 | Tigers |
| Sunday, Mar. 21 | Cardinals |
| Saturday, Mar. 27 | Nationals |

### 1ST HALF/3 GAMES - $78

| | |
|---|---|
| Wednesday, Mar. 10 | Mets |
| Friday, Mar. 12 | Pirates |
| Saturday, Mar. 13 | Blue Jays |

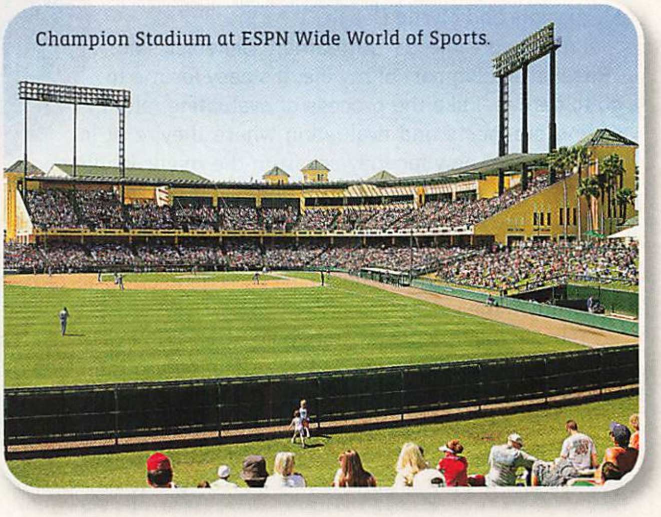
### 2ND HALF/3 GAMES - $83

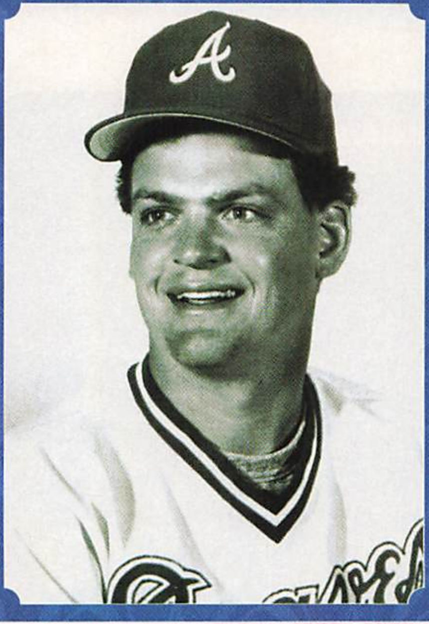
| | |
|---|---|
| Saturday, Mar. 27 | Nationals |
| Tuesday, Mar. 30 | Yankees |
| Wednesday, Mar. 31 | Astros |

(Mini Plan seats are located in selected Upper Level Reserved or Bleacher Reserved sections.)

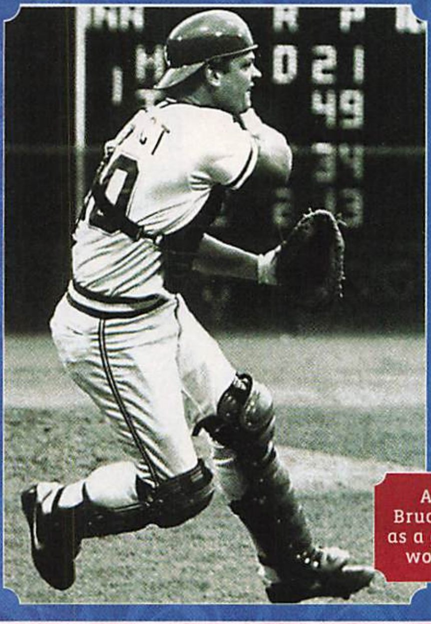
## CONTACT

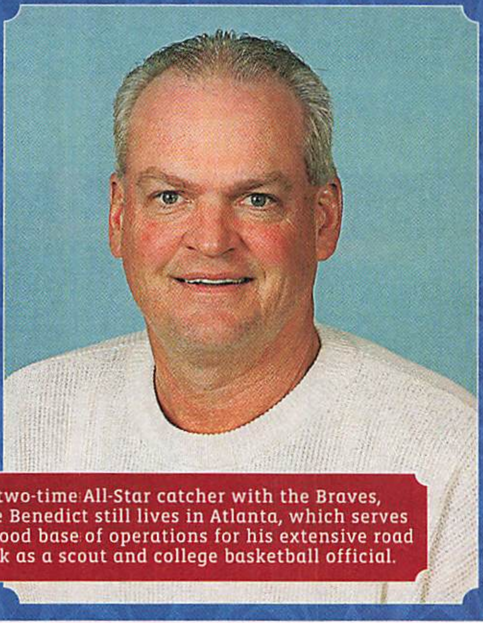
For more information on tickets and the schedule, visit disneysports.com/atlantabraves or call (407) 939-GAME (4263).


Champion Stadium at ESPN Wide World of Sports.



PHOTOS: ATLANTA BRAVES





A two-time All-Star catcher with the Braves, Bruce Benedict still lives in Atlanta, which serves as a good base of operations for his extensive road work as a scout and college basketball official.

SPECIAL

# DOUBLE DUTY

## Scouting For The Cardinals And Officiating College Basketball Keeps Benedict On The Run

BY BRIAN KNAPP

**BRUCE BENEDICT HAS NO OFF-SEASON.**

The 54-year-old former Braves catcher spends the spring and summer months as a scout for the National League Central Division champion St. Louis Cardinals, then transitions to his second career as a Division I college basketball referee in the fall and winter. The busy schedule keeps him sharp, mentally and physically.

A two-time NL All-Star (1981 and '83) who spent his entire 12-year playing career in Atlanta, Benedict starting scouting for the Cardinals prior to the 2008 season. His responsibilities revolve around scouting the National League East, including the Braves and their top three minor league affiliates at Gwinnett, Mississippi and Myrtle Beach.

"I'm responsible for 20 teams," Benedict said. "Baseball's a big part of my life. It's easy for me to go to games. I like the process of evaluating talent, seeing prospects and evaluating where they're at in their careers, how far they are from the major leagues, whether or not they have the potential to make it to the major leagues. The process is not only interesting but fulfilling."

Benedict, originally from Birmingham, Ala., likes the flexibility his position affords him, though he can spend upwards of 20 days a month on the road.

"You can make your own schedule," he said. "I've got 20 teams to cover, and the work needs to be done before the trade deadline. I look for the teams that are playing each other, so instead of making two trips, I can make one. I don't think it's good to spend all your time in the major leagues, and I don't think it's good to spend all your time in A-ball. It's good to have a mix."

He speaks from experience. A career .242 hitter, Benedict played nearly 1,000 games in the major leagues. A fifth-round draft pick of the Braves in 1976, he enjoyed his best season in 1983, when he set career benchmarks in batting (.298), games played (134), at-bats (423), runs (43), hits (126) and on-base percentage (.385). He also singled in one of two career All-Star at-bats off the late Dan Quisenberry that year.

Benedict retired after the 1989 season, but not before he crossed paths with two pitchers embarking on likely Hall of Fame careers, Tom Glavine and John Smoltz, who would lead Atlanta to unprecedented success. In fact, he caught Smoltz's first major league win and strikeout in 1988. Benedict believes the time he spent as a player gives him an edge in terms of identifying and projecting talent.

"I don't think that it's mandatory (for a scout to be a former player), but I think it gives you an advantage," he said. "I can look at players, look at their body language, how they conduct themselves. I've had those feelings. It's an advantage to know how the game's played, what it takes to be in the major leagues, and what it takes to be successful in the major leagues."

In addition, Benedict has managerial experience on his resume. He managed Atlanta farm teams at Class-A Danville (1993) and Double-A Greenville (1994-95), helping oversee the careers of memorable Braves farmhands such as Jermaine Dye and Jason Schmidt. He spent 10 years in the Mets organization, managing their Triple-A affiliate in 1996, serving as their bench coach from 1997 to 1999, and working as an advance scout from 2000 to 2006.

Benedict, a member of the Braves' 1982 division-winning club, has not ruled out a move back to the dugout should the right situation present itself.

"If the opportunity was a good one for me and was attractive to my family, of course, I'd take a look at it," he said. "If you get into coaching, you're making a commitment, basically from Feb. 10 until the end of October. It's a big, big commitment. I've had teams throw out feelers. I've had maybe three to five opportunities to manage in the minor leagues, but the right situation hasn't come up."

At this point in his career, Benedict might be better suited for a front office position.

"I think if a situation like that presented itself, I'd certainly be interested," he said. "You have to be qualified when you get there. You need to have seen baseball from every angle. I'd like to do that at some point. I think I'm qualified to do that."

As the calendar flips to fall each year, Benedict shifts his focus to his second love - basketball. He started officiating at the junior high and high school levels while still catching for the Braves in the mid 1980s and has spent the past 19 years working college games. Benedict draws 40-50 assignments per season in the SEC, Atlantic Sun and Horizon leagues and has refereed several NCAA Tournament games, including Indiana's upset of top-seeded Duke in the Sweet 16 back in 2002.

"What I've always liked about officiating is that it's a great fit for baseball," Benedict said. "I'm very proud of my career as a referee. It's been a big investment. We used to kid ourselves, saying the three hardest things were getting to the game, calling the game, and getting to the next one."

He faces many challenges on the court.

"Players are quicker, bigger and faster now," Benedict said. "The action takes place at a quicker pace. There's so much athletic ability out there. You have to manage people in the game. That's an acquired ability. You have to know what to say, how to say it, and when not to say anything. They hold you accountable. All the games are taped. All the games are reviewed."

Benedict works hard to diffuse any volatile situations he may encounter.

"I have not had many ejections in my 19 years," he said. "I'd say less than a handful. I will say that when it's gotten to that point, they've earned it."

Benedict resides in the Sandy Springs area of Atlanta with his wife of 30 years, Kathleen, a fourth-grade teacher. They have three children, including a son, Griffin, who catches in the San Diego Padres system.

"He's a better hitter than his dad," Benedict said.

## Memories

BY STEVE FALL

# TAKE A SWING ON THE WOOD MARKET

LOUISVILLE SLUGGER
125
HILLERICH & BRADSBY CO
MADE IN U.S.A.
LOUISVILLE, KY.
GENUINE
John Logan
LOUISVILLE SLUGGER

**DURING FIVE DECADES** of collecting, Freddie Hanneman Jr. accumulated over $100,000 in sports and Hollywood memorabilia. When he decided to sell his collection, long-time Braves fans received a rare opportunity.

Hanneman, who lived outside Milwaukee before moving to Arizona, sold his collection during an October auction. It featured prized items like two bats signed by 19 members of the 1957 World Champion Braves. Considering they each included three Hall of Fame autographs – Hank Aaron, Warren Spahn and Eddie Mathews – the bats went for reasonable prices ($450 and $550).

Another 1957 Braves bat lacked Aaron's signature but had 20 others. That sold for $500.

Carl Seitz, owner of the House in the Woods Auction Gallery that held the auction, said a story that ran in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel sparked considerable interest. Hanneman's collection included two bats signed by select members of the 500-home run. One with Aaron, Mathews, Reggie Jackson and Ernie Banks went for $450. Another with the first three of those sluggers sold for $400.

The auction also had a "300 Wins Bat" ideal for a Braves fan. Autographed by Spahn, Phil Niekro, Tom Glavine and Don Sutton, that piece sold for just $100.

John Taube, owner of JT Sports, says that the auction circuit offers a good selection of bats.

"The vintage market – since they're not making any more of them – most of that resides in collections," said Taube. "So, when something is happening with an individual collector, they may become available."

The problem with auctions is buyers have a limited window in which to purchase, and competing fans may drive up prices. Stores provide more flexibility, but usually won't have as much selection as a large online auction. JT Sports had an autographed, game-used Johnny Logan (former Braves great shortstop) bat (above) on its website, along with others from former Braves Jeff Francoeur and Andruw Jones.

Game-used bats usually cost two-to-three times as much as autographed store-bought bats, according to Taube. With most products, wear and excessive use is a bad thing. For baseball bats, just the opposite holds true.

"The true value in the game-used market is the amount of use that is on the bat, and also the ability to place it in the player's hands," said Taube. "The more identifiable characteristics of a player that are on a game-used bat, that determines value."

Taube explained how, for example, Chipper Jones' bats all have a sticky substance applied the same way, and the number 10 on the knob and top barrel. They also have concentrated contact points where his bat connects with the ball, while most hitters have them spread all over the barrel.

Cliff Cole, who lives 30 miles northwest of Atlanta in Acworth, takes an interesting approach with his bat collection.

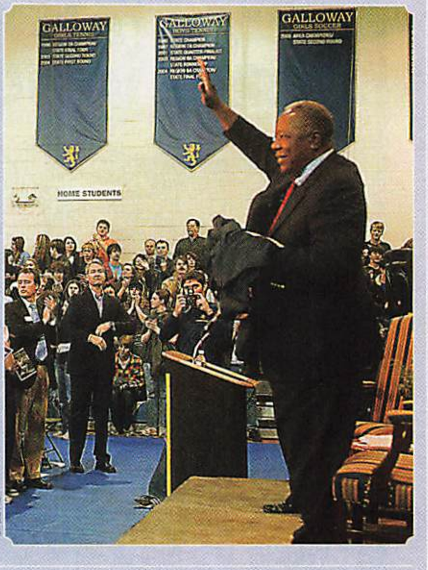
"I've probably focused more on the minor league bats than the major league bats, just because of the cost of getting a game-used bat, especially from a superstar or a big-name player," said Cole.

Cole secured a Jason Heyward game bat, realizing that the Braves' top prospect could become a star.

# ALUMNI NOTES

Braves fans in Florida Mar. 21 can have an opportunity to see **Hank Aaron** (OF/1B, 1954-74) inducted into the Palm Beach County Sports Hall of Fame. Aaron has a winter home in Palm Beach County and has a street named after him - Hank Aaron Drive, in West Palm Beach, where the Braves used to hold spring training. Induction ceremonies are Mar. 21 at the Palm Beach Convention Center. For ticket information, call (561) 233-3180.

Aaron spoke at the Galloway School (R) in Atlanta on Oct. 20, discussing his days as a player, his Chasing the Dream Foundation, and his community activism and efforts to support underprivileged youth.


SPECIAL

**Jeff Francoeur** (OF, 2005-09) underwent successful surgery to repair a tear of the collateral ligament in his left thumb Nov. 2. He is expected to be ready for spring training.

The Toronto Blue Jays named **Mike Mordecai** (INF, 1994-97) roving infield instructor.

**Mark Kotsay** (OF, 2008) re-signed with the White Sox rather than pursue free agency.

The Toronto Blue Jays signed **Clarence "Cito" Gaston** (OF/1B, 1967, '75-78) to a four-year consulting contract that begins after 2010 when his managerial contract expires.

The Marlins named **Randy St. Claire** (RHP, 1991-92) pitching coach.

**Ned Yost** (Coach, 1991-2002) reportedly interviewed for the Houston Astros' managerial vacancy.

**Dewayne Wise** (OF, 2004) refused outright assignment by the White Sox and became a free agent.

Natalie Niekro, daughter of the late **Joe Niekro** (RHP, 1973-74) and niece of **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87), threw out the ceremonial first pitches prior to three Arizona Fall League games during "Aneurysm Awareness Week" the week of Oct. 26. She raised over $11,000 for aneurysm research during the week when sponsors donated $36 (Joe's uniform number) per strikeout by AFL pitchers affiliated with any of the seven MLB teams her dad pitched for, including the Braves. Natalie also made a guest appearance on the MLB Network's broadcast of the AFL's Rising Stars Game.

The Dodgers did not pick up their option on the contract of **Will Ohman** (LHP, 2008).

**Ron Schueler** (RHP, 1972-73) was named a special advisor to the GM of the Washington Nationals.

The **Bobby Bragan** (Mgr., 1963-66) Youth Foundation held its annual Lifetime Achievement Award Gala in Fort Worth, Tex., on Oct. 30, Bragan's 92nd birthday. Jim Morris, who made his major league debut as a relief pitcher with Tampa Bay in 1999 at the age of 35 and eventually was the subject of a Disney movie, received the Bragan award.

Shawn Murphy, son of **Dale Murphy** (OF/1B/C, 1976-90), was waived by the Miami Dolphins Oct. 20, but the offensive guard was quickly picked up by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Murphy was Miami's fourth-round draft pick last year.

## BIRTHDAYS

### DECEMBER

| | |
|---|---|
| 1ST | GREG MCMICHAEL (43) |
| | REGGIE SANDERS (42) |
| 2ND | ADRIAN DEVINE (58) |
| | STEVE SISCO (40) |
| | **PETER MOYLAN (31)** |
| | MARK KOTSAY (34) |
| 3RD | DAVE EILERS (73) |
| | DAMON BERRYHILL (46) |
| | PAUL BYRD (39) |
| | MATT CHILDERS (31) |
| 4TH | LEE BALES (65) |
| | ALEXIS INFANTE (48) |
| 5TH | GARY ROENICKE (55) |
| | GERMAN JIMENEZ (47) |
| 6TH | FREDDIE VELAZQUEZ (72) |
| | AMADO SAMUEL (71) |
| | ARNOLD UMBACH (67) |
| | STEVE BEDROSIAN (52) |
| 7TH | OZZIE VIRGIL (53) |
| 8TH | JOHN MIZEROCK (49) |
| 9TH | ED ROMERO (52) |
| | TONY TARASCO (39) |
| 10TH | BOB ROSELLI (78) |
| | BOB PRIDDY (70) |
| | PAUL ASSENMACHER (49) |
| | BRANDON JONES (26) |
| 11TH | JOHNNY O'BRIEN (79) |
| 12TH | RALPH GARR (64) |
| | GREGOR BLANCO (26) |
| 13TH | MIKE MORDECAI (42) |
| 16TH | NEIL CHRISLEY (78) |
| 17TH | CURTIS PRIDE (41) |
| | MIKE CATHER (39) |
| 18TH | GINO CIMOLI (80) |
| | JIM CLANCY (54) |
| | CHRIS SEELBACH (37) |
| 19TH | JOE SLUSARSKI (43) |
| | RAFAEL SORIANO (30) |
| 20TH | MARC VALDES (28) |
| 21ST | BOB RUSH (84) |
| | JACK DANIELS (82) |
| | PAUL CASANOVA (68) |
| | **ROGER MCDOWELL (49)** |
| | BUDDY CARLYLE (32) |
| | ROYCE RING (29) |
| 22ND | ALEX MONCHAK (90) |
| | LONNIE SMITH (54) |
| | GARY COOPER (53) |
| | DAVID NIED (41) |
| | REID GORECKI (29) |
| 23RD | DAVE MAY (66) |
| | PASCUAL MATOS (35) |
| 24TH | KEVIN MILLWOOD (35) |
| 25TH | DICK MANVILLE (83) |
| | RUBEN GOTAY (27) |
| 26TH | STU MILLER (82) |
| | WAYNE CAUSEY (73) |
| | JOHN BRAUN (70) |
| | RAY SADECKI (69) |
| | CHRIS CHAMBLISS (61) |
| | CHARLES THOMAS (31) |
| | **OMAR INFANTE (28)** |
| 28TH | STEVE KUCZEK (85) |
| | ZANE SMITH (49) |
| | MELVIN NIEVES (38) |
| 29TH | ROD NICHOLS (45) |
| | JARET WRIGHT (34) |
| | JIM BROWER (37) |
| 30TH | FRANK TORRE (78) |
| 31ST | SAM MCCONNELL (34) |
| | CHRIS REITSMA (32) |

**ChopTalk**
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# THANK YOU!

**THE END OF THE YEAR** is the perfect time for reflection. This is issue No. 189 of ChopTalk, completing its 16th year. There was a break of three months at the beginning of 2005, while CT was being resurrected after the previous publisher shuttered it after 11 years.

I was the associate editor for the first 16 issues, beginning in January 1994, and have been editor for the last 173, including publisher for the last 57 of those.

Many of you have "streaks" just as long as subscribers. It is no exaggeration to say there would be no ChopTalk without you, because CT exists entirely due to your support.

There is very little paid advertising in this magazine. In fact, there's not a single paid ad in this issue, which is typical during the off-season. Therefore, it's easy to see how we pay the bills. Unlike most magazines, which operate primarily on ad revenue and thus can offer relatively low subscription rates, CT exists almost completely on subscriber revenue.

Occasionally, we hear from people who think $37.95 is too expensive for a 12-month subscription. Believe it or not, we also hear from people who think we should charge even more. The facts are that when publishers changed in April 2005, the price was $34.95, so it has increased only $3 in five years. If you break the price down by month, you pay $3.16 per issue. We hope you think it's money well spent.

There are many ways to "follow" the Braves these days, but there's only one way to "know" the Braves - and that's to read ChopTalk every month. It's the only source for the extensive, in-depth information you receive every month. In fact, it's about the only truly original and often "exclusive" source of Braves information there is.

You can find press releases, re-written press releases, and shared information all over the place, and you can find plenty of information that "bloggers" rip off from other sources. The same stories and rumors are circulated over and over and over, ad nauseam.

And then ChopTalk arrives around the first of each month, and you get the type of information real fans - serious, diehard fans - need... crave.

CT goes to great lengths to provide you this information. In fact, the monthly editorial budget is roughly twice what it was under the previous publisher - and yet the subscription price has increased just $3 in five years in spite of higher postage rates and paper costs.

Many of the stories we bring you never would have seen the light of day under the previous publisher, because the expense wouldn't have been funded. The most-obvious example was the two-month series of stories that Patty Rasmussen contributed in September and October from the Braves' new player development academy in the Canary Islands. Other highlights from the past year include visits with Rafael Soriano in the Dominican Republic and Martin Prado and Gregor Blanco in Venezuela (January).

Then there's the physical appearance of the magazine, another dramatic upgrade over the old CT.

Where is this heading? Not to a price increase, if that's what you think!

No, we simply want to thank you for your support, which literally makes all of this possible. And we want to remind you that now is not only a perfect time to renew your subscription and perhaps gift subscriptions, too, but it's also a good time to encourage other Braves fans you know to subscribe - and receive a free autograph, too. In fact, maybe you should get them a gift subscription so they'll stop taking your CT home with them!

We really appreciate your continued support!

As this issue was going to press, it was announced that Brian McCann won his third Silver Slugger (2006, '08) in four years as the best hitting catcher in the National League. Only six catchers - Mike Piazza, Pudge Rodriguez, Lance Parrish, Jorge Posada, Gary Carter and Benito Santiago - have ever won more than three since the Silver Slugger was rolled out in 1980.

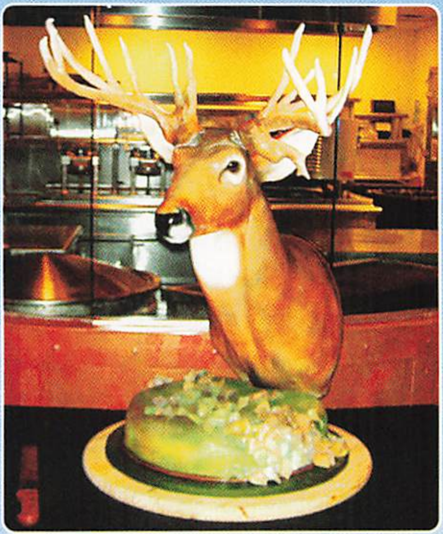
**THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK** was mailed Nov. 19. The January issue will be mailed Dec. 23.

# BEYOND BASEBALL

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

Avid deer hunter Adam LaRoche must've thought he was hallucinating when he saw his cake at the surprise 30th birthday party his wife held for him.

## SURPRISE!



SPECIAL

**JENN LAROCHE** pulled off the surprise of the year when she managed to gather family and friends at the Ameristar Casino Hotel in Kansas City, Kan., Nov. 5, for a surprise 30th birthday party for her husband, **Adam LaRoche**. Among the guests who made the trip to Kansas City for the bash were **Chipper Jones** and his wife, **Sharon**, **Tim** and **Kim Hudson**, **Brian McCann** and his wife, **Ashley**. Former Braves outfielder **Ryan Langerhans** and his wife, **Shari**, made the trip from Round Rock, Tex., with their newborn son, **Kasen**. Former Braves pitcher **Blaine Boyer** and his wife, **Ginsey**, also attended the festivities. The theme of the party was a roast, with **Willie Robertson**, one of LaRoche's Buck Commander partners, serving as emcee. Jenn further shocked Adam by having his first car, a Chevy Suburban, completely refurbished and driven into the middle of the casino. Kim Hudson said LaRoche was completely dumbfounded by the party and gift. Jenn was paid back for all her hard work planning the event when she won $600 on a hand of poker at the gaming table! The next day, some of the guests drove to the LaRoches' hometown, Ft. Scott, for a weekend at his E-3 Ranch. Weekend festivities included the Rockin' and Ropin' for Pennies in the Park, a rodeo competition and country music concert held Nov. 7 in Ft. Scott. The event, which was Adam's idea, raised funds for redeveloping a local park and featured an afternoon of cattle roping and bull riding, followed by an evening concert by **Jason Aldean**. The day's events were filmed for inclusion in the hunting "reality" show Buck Commander, which airs on the Outdoor Channel.

**BRIAN MCCANN** and former Brave **Nick Green**, a free agent who spent last year with the Red Sox, were honored Oct. 30 at their alma mater, Duluth High School. The school in suburban Atlanta retired the numbers of McCann (32) and Green (20) at a midfield ceremony during halftime of their football game. McCann set school records in both home runs (14) and RBIs (38) as a sophomore in 2000. Green finished with 111 career hits at Duluth, a school record...

SPECIAL

Brian McCann speaks to the crowd at a Duluth High football game during a ceremony to retire his number and Nick Green's.

**Bobby Cox** hosted over 100 golfers at the Second Annual **Daniel Hager** Memorial Celebrity Golf Tournament held Oct. 19, to benefit the Daniel Hager Endowment Fund of the Georgia Tech Foundation. A Georgia Tech grad and the son of Cox's good friends, **Gerry** and **Kaye Litzinger**, Hager was killed in an automobile accident several years ago. The Litzingers decided to fund a scholarship in his memory, and Cox was happy to lend his support. The tournament was held at the Polo Golf and Country Club and featured such celebrity golfers as **Phil Niekro**, Braves coaches **Roger McDowell**, **Chino Cadahia**, and **Glenn Hubbard**, former Braves second baseman **Mark Lemke**, Gwinnett Braves manager **Dave Brundage**, former Atlanta Falcons quarterback **Steve Bartkowski** and former Milwaukee Brewers manager and Braves coach **Ned Yost**...

Braves top prospect **Jason Heyward** was honored as a L.E.A.D. Honorary Ambassador at the inaugural L.E.A.D. Legacy Luncheon on Nov. 6 at Atlantic Station. L.E.A.D, which stands for Launch Expose Advise Direct, is an Atlanta non-profit preparing selected inner-city teens to compete for baseball scholarships through an aggressive program promoting academics, athleticism, and civic service. Heyward began volunteering his time with L.E.A.D. after his personal hitting instructor, **C.J. Stewart**, founded the organization in 2007. L.E.A.D. also established the Jason Heyward MVP Award, to be given annually to the player who maintains at least a B average, achieves high athletic success, and demonstrates a passion for community service. Heyward's parents, **Eugene** and **Laura Heyward** were also in attendance at the luncheon. Eugene is a member of L.E.A.D.'s Board of Directors. **L.V. Ware**, a Braves outfield prospect who played this past season in Danville, is also a supporter of L.E.A.D. and spoke to luncheon guests about the importance of L.E.A.D.'s principles in his life. Both Heyward and Ware, as well as other volunteer coaches, were on hand the next day, Nov. 7, to help coach 100 young players from the Atlanta area at Turner Field during a L.E.A.D. Celebrity Baseball Clinic. For more information about the organization, visit lead2legacy.org...

**Chipper Jones** hosted his 7th Annual Celebrity Golf Invitational Nov. 2 at Bear's Best Golf Club in Suwanee, Ga. The golf tournament, and banquet and auction held the night before, benefit Cystic Fibrosis, Camp Twin Lakes and Stetson University. Celebrity golfers included Jones and his dad, **Larry**, **Tim Hudson**, **Brian McCann**, **Clint Sammons**, **Chino Cadahia**, **Glenn Hubbard**, **Roger McDowell**, **Terry Pendleton** and **Brian Snitker**, former Braves **Ron Gant**, **Greg McMichael**, **Chris Hammond** and **Zane Smith** and general manager **Frank Wren**. Sammons was on this year's winning fivesome. The Chipper Jones Family Foundation recently joined forces with a number of high profile non-profit agencies, including the **Warrick Dunn** Foundation, the USO and Military.com to provide free college entrance exam software, SAT/ACT Prep, for all military personnel and their dependents. Eligible families can visit eknowledge.com/nfl for more information...

Braves bullpen coach **Eddie Perez** is managing the Aguilas de Zulia in his native Venezuela this winter, but his off-season obligation has caused an unintended effect. Because he's managed in Venezuela the past three winter seasons, his residency requirement for U.S. citizenship has not been fulfilled. He hopes that by mid-2010 he will be able to take his test and obtain citizenship...

**Brian** and **Ashley McCann** were among the guests at the Fourth Annual Jaden's Ladder Fairway Affair Gala, held Nov. 7 in Atlanta. The event was hosted by former Braves centerfielder **Andruw Jones** and his wife, **Nicole**...

**Chipper Jones** always says his mom, **Lynne**, is a "tough cookie," but even she was knocked for a loop when she crossed paths with an almost 6-foot rattlesnake in a stall of her horse barn at the DoubleDime Ranch in Texas. Lynne was grooming one of her horses, and as she was cleaning up, knocked a towel to the floor. "I reached down next to the grooming box, all I could see were the diamonds on the back of that coiled up – sleeping – snake," said Lynne. "I levitated!" One of the ranch hands came in to capture and kill the snake, which Lynne said weighed between 10 to 15 pounds. The snake, which they plan to mount, had 13 rattles and a button on its tail.

SPECIAL

Tim Hudson (L) and David Ross (R) flank Bo Jackson, who played in the majors and in the NFL, when all three got together for a home run hitting contest at Auburn, where they all attended college.

## LONG KNOCKERS

**TIM HUDSON** and catcher **David Ross** participated in an annual Celebrity Home Run Derby Oct. 16 at Auburn University's Plainsman Park to benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lee County (Ala.). Hudson and Ross both attended Auburn and played together in 1996-1997. Other celebrity sluggers included Auburn alums **Bo Jackson**, **Frank Sanders** and **Gabe Gross**, who ended up winning the event with 26 home runs overall, 11 in the final round. Ross came up short in the finals with just 9 homers. Jackson was a great two-sport athlete, playing football for the Oakland Raiders and baseball with the Kansas City Royals, Chicago White Sox and California Angels. Sanders played in the NFL for the Arizona Cardinals and Baltimore Ravens. Gross currently plays outfield for the Tampa Bay Rays.

## GONE FISHIN'

SPECIAL

Tommy Hanson (R-L), Kris Medlen, Hanson's father, Tom, and Ryne Reynoso show off some of their biggest prizes from an outing on Lake Allatoona.

**PITCHERS** and roommates **Tommy Hanson**, **Kris Medlen** and **Ryne Reynoso** (Mississippi Braves) and Hanson's dad, **Tom**, spent Oct. 10 on Lake Allatoona, northwest of Atlanta, with **Robert Eidson** of First Bite Guide Service. The group caught around 20 striped and hybrid bass, and Eidson picked up on the friendly banter between Hanson and Medlen. "The guys were great," said Eidson, "a joy to fish with. I think Kris caught the biggest and most fish that day, but I am sure Tommy would tell you a different story!"

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.

A
THE BIGGEST
LIL' BRAVES FAN

## "BIG" FAN ✉

I am the Biggest Lil' Braves Fan and the biggest little fan of Chipper Jones! I spent my third birthday at a Braves game at Turner Field. It was awesome, and my brother, Foster, and I had a wonderful time. I hope to go back real soon.

**MARY ELLEN JONES**
Lyons, Ga.

## BEATING THE ODDS ✉

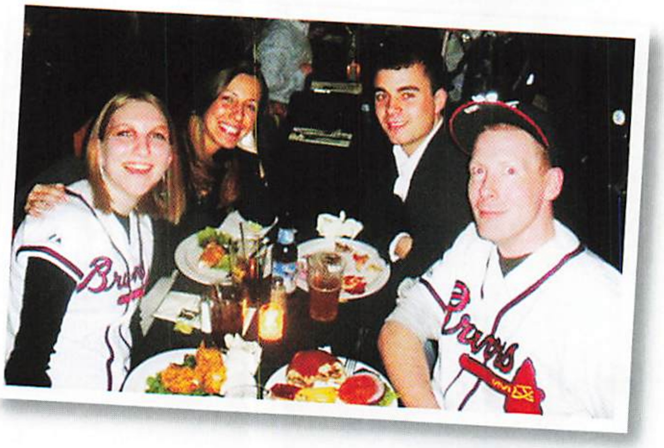
I thoroughly enjoyed the article on Chipper Jones (Aug. '09 CT) and the other interesting stories. Chipper and the Braves are one of the reasons I am alive. In 1992, I became a huge baseball fan and particularly a Braves and Chipper Jones fan. I moved to Greenville, S.C., in 1989, and a new friend started taking me to the Greenville Braves games. When Chipper and Javy Lopez were promoted to Atlanta during the 1993 season, I felt like "my boys" were playing in the majors. I have followed the Braves avidly since then. I couldn't be more proud if they were actually "my boys." In 2001, I developed a deadly brain tumor, and my husband was told the average length of life after surgery for this kind of tumor was 12-18 months. That was eight years ago. Following "my boys" and the Braves became a real passion for me. Another big Braves fan and friend in my church, Dr. Floyd Hall, often shared his season tickets with Jerry and me for a trip to Atlanta to see the Braves. I have loved defying medical odds and keep pulling for the Braves to repeat the 1995 post-season. Greenville is still a Braves town, and I will never abandon my Braves and the "boys" who gave them to me.

**DONNA FORRESTER**
Easley, S.C.

## NEW YORK STATE OF MIND ✉

I'd like to thank ChopTalk for its impeccable service. My boyfriend, Richie, is an avid subscriber, and when his July issue didn't show, he was very disappointed. I got on the phone, received a prompt and pleasant response, and about a week later, there was a package waiting at his door. You'd have thought it contained something highly fragile by the thorough wrapping job (Well, an issue of ChopTalk certainly is valuable!). It just goes to show that the fame and popularity of the Atlanta Braves knows no bounds. My boyfriend is, without a doubt, the biggest Braves fan ever. But what really makes him stand out is the fact that together, we're just a couple of New Yorkers. We can take or leave the Yanks and Mets, but the Braves... well, let's just say we can't live without 'em. Here's a photo of us dining out - my boyfriend Richie and me in our Braves jerseys, with our pals Mayara and Ritchie. We made such an impression with our matching outfits that the evening's performing act even included us in their routine! In short, we really love the Braves, from all the way up here in New York. You always make us proud to be your fans!

**JODI BONELLI & RICHIE RIKER**
New York, N.Y.



CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

## NUMBERS GAME

This is a picture of my grandma, sister, and me on top of my bunk bed. My room is decorated with all Braves memorabilia. My grandma and I have hung all the retired Braves numbers on the wall and recently added Greg Maddux's #31. We hung it on the same night the Braves retired his jersey and added it in left field at Turner Field. I am looking forward to adding the retired numbers of John Smoltz and Tom Glavine in the near future, though I'm starting to run out of space!

**NATHAN BECKER**
**Houston, Texas**

PHIL
35
WARREN
21
PAHN
DALE
3
MURPHY
EDDIE
41
ATHEWS
Braves
KA
GIRL

## COVER COLLECTOR

My son, Daniel, and I enjoyed the Braves coming from behind to filet the Fish (Marlins) on Aug. 23. We had a great time, as we always do at Turner Field where everyone is so friendly and gracious to obsessed fans like me. Daniel tried out his arm at the pitching game, and I enjoyed coming face-to-face with Javy Lopez, always a Brave in my heart. He was so great and patient to sign autographs for everyone that was waiting. We also got Tommy Hanson to sign his ChopTalk cover (Aug. '09). I had Chipper and Brian's (McCann) ChopTalk cover, too, but we were unable to get their autographs. Maybe next time!

**JO CAPE, Vienna, Ga**

## SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

### WRITE TO US

Talkin' Chop c/o ChopTalk
P.O. Box 81247
Conyers, Ga. 30013-9247

Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

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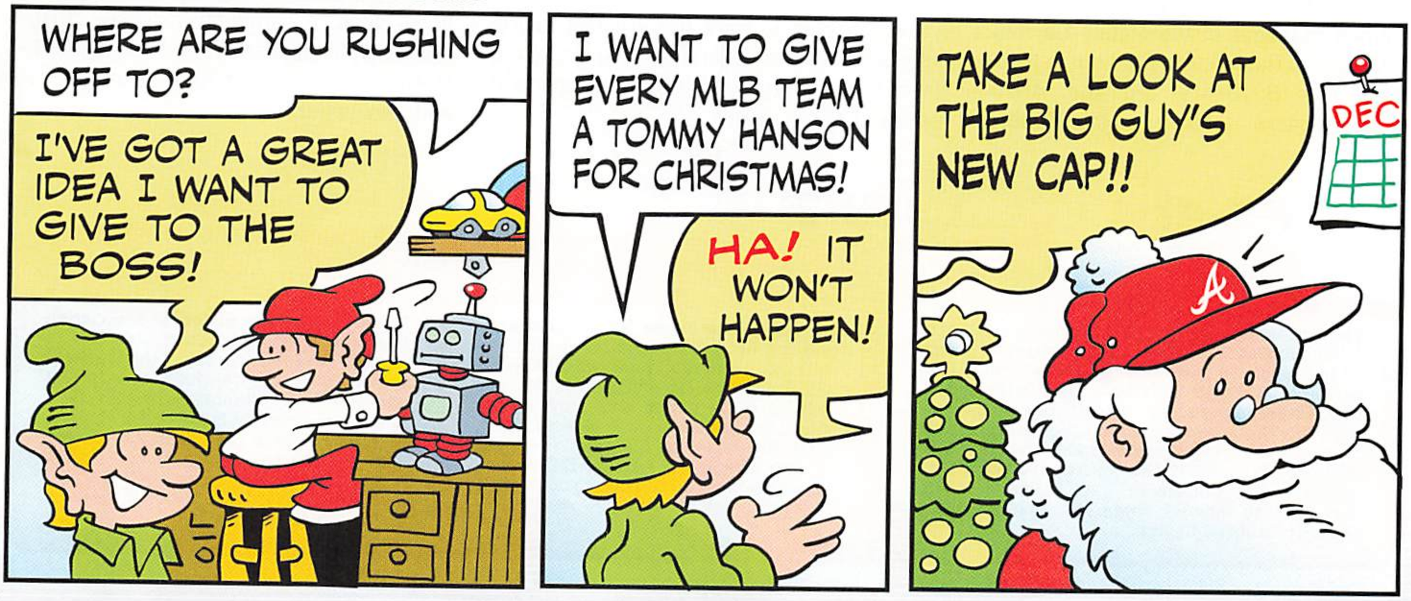
### WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves
P.O. Box 4064
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

## SANTA'S TRUE COLORS


WHERE ARE YOU RUSHING OFF TO?
I'VE GOT A GREAT IDEA I WANT TO GIVE TO THE BOSS!
I WANT TO GIVE EVERY MLB TEAM A TOMMY HANSON FOR CHRISTMAS!
HA! IT WON'T HAPPEN!
TAKE A LOOK AT THE BIG GUY'S NEW CAP!!
DEC

# BAJA RUN

**BRAVES HALL OF FAMER** David Justice (R) took his golf game south of the border in mid-October to participate in the inaugural Puerto Los Cabos World Cup & Celebrity Golf Tournament in Los Cabos on the tip of Mexico's Baja Peninsula. Justice, who lives in San Diego, was accompanied by his wife, Rebecca, and mingled with celebrities such as critically acclaimed actor and golf fanatic Samuel L. Jackson. The event also included a sport fishing tournament and an outdoor concert.

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SPEDAL

## WALK-OFF HITS

Fans in the Charleston, S.C., area on Jan. 22 will have the opportunity to hear Dale Murphy as the featured speaker at the 6th Annual Hot Stove Banquet & Silent Auction at Mark Clark Hall on The Citadel campus. The event is a collaboration between the Charleston RiverDogs and The Citadel. A reception and silent auction begin at 6 p.m., followed by dinner at 7:30. Tickets are $65 per person. For individual tickets and additional information, contact the RiverDogs at (843) 577-DOGS (3647). Tickets may also be purchased at riverdogs.com.

Rico Brogna, who played his final major league season with the Braves in 2001, will have his first managerial assignment next season after doing a variety of things, including coaching high school football and basketball, as well as scouting, since he retired. The former first baseman was named manager of the Mobile BayBears, who play in Hank Aaron Stadium in Mobile, Ala. The BayBears are the Arizona Diamondbacks' affiliate in the Double-A Southern League. The former slick-fielding first baseman, 39, was the minor league field coordinator for Arizona last year.

Former Braves prospect Scott Thorman, who was released by the Milwaukee Brewers and Texas Rangers last year before catching on with Kansas City, signed a one-year contract with the Royals for 2010. The leftfielder/first baseman, who will be 28 next month, hit .288 with 20 home runs and 67 RBIs in 108 games last year for Omaha, the Royals' Triple-A affiliate in the Pacific Coast League.

According to a Harris Poll compiled in early October, fans regard Hank Aaron as the second greatest baseball player of all-time, trailing only Babe Ruth. When Harris asked people to rank the greatest sports stars of all-time, regardless of sport, Aaron was ranked in a tie for 10th with basketball player LeBron James.

Aaron made an autograph-signing appearance for Steiner Sports on Nov. 7 at Roosevelt Field in Garden City, N.Y. He signed for a couple of hundred people for over an hour.

The High Museum of Art in Atlanta will premiere an exhibition by California-based photographer Robert Weingarten in January. Weingarten's project consists of 20 large-scale digitally-created portraits of American icons, among them Aaron.

The Mask Project that raises money for the Denver (Colo.) Hospice by selling masks created by hundreds of celebrities will take place May 5 and will include a mask contributed by Aaron.

Several Braves who played major roles in the team's success from 1991-2005 will be on the National Baseball Hall of Fame ballot soon. A sampling includes: 2010 - Andres Galarraga and Fred McGriff; 2011 - Marquis Grissom; and 2012 - Brian Jordan and Javy Lopez.

## FAN CLUBS

### BRAVES 400 FAN CLUB

**The Braves 400 Fan Club** is the official fan club of the Atlanta Braves. It is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting baseball at all levels. Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter and the opportunity to participate in activities such as road trips, luncheons, the annual banquet, and charitable events. Send payment to: Braves 400 Fan Club, P.O. Box 7689, Atlanta, Ga. 30309. For more information, call the organization's hotline at (770) 416-4539 or visit braves400.org. Annual winter banquet Feb. 13 at Marriott Perimeter Center.

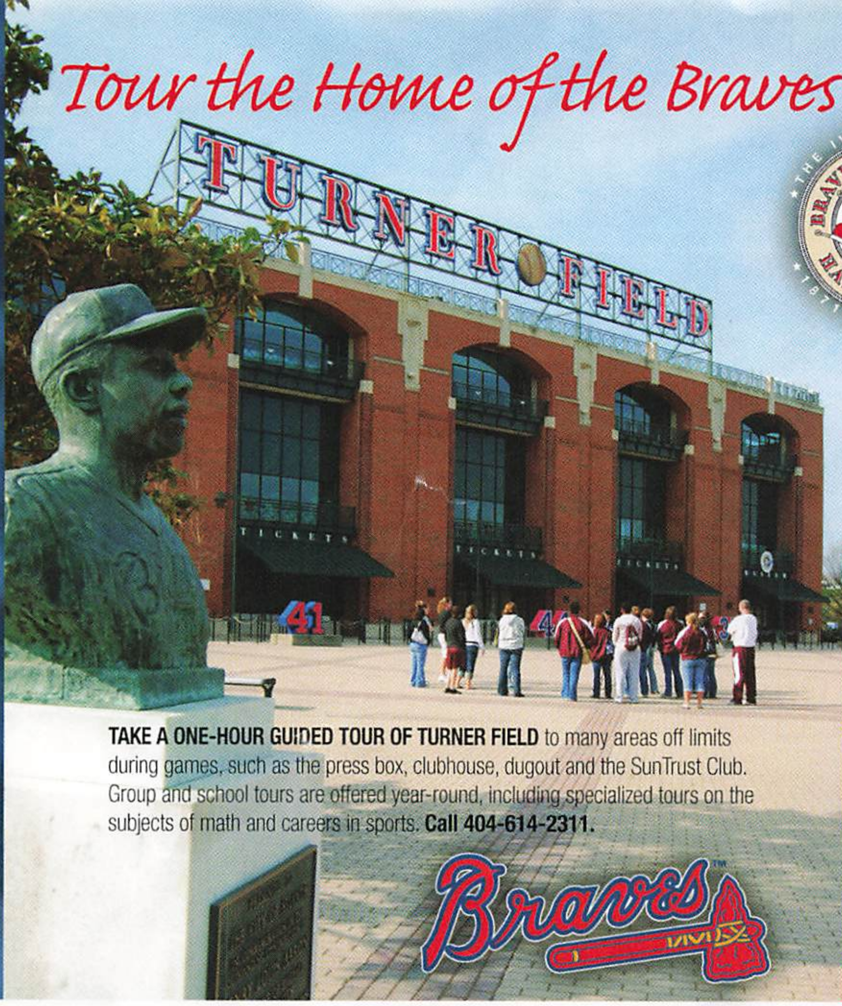
### MILWAUKEE BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association** is a non-profit organization that promotes the memory of the Milwaukee Braves (1953-65). Annual membership is $25 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Milwaukee Braves Historical Association, 6700 N. Range Line Rd., Glendale, Wisc. 53209. For information, call (414) 347-1212 or visit milwaukeebraveshistoricalassociation.com

### BOSTON BRAVES HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

**The Boston Braves Historical Association** is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping alive the memory of the Braves in the city where the franchise began in 1871 and that it represented through 1952. Annual membership is $15 and includes a newsletter. Send payment to: Boston Braves Historical Association, P.O. Box 67195, Chestnut Hill, Mass. 02467-0002. For more information, visit Boston-braves.com or e-mail bbraves@beld.net.

# *Tour the Home of the Braves*



1995
1996
2000
2001

**VISIT THE BRAVES MUSEUM & HALL OF FAME AT TURNER FIELD** and view more than 600 Braves artifacts and photographs on display. See items from the team's years in Boston (1871-1952), Milwaukee (1953-65), and Atlanta (1966-present), including Hank Aaron's 715th home run bat and ball, the 1995 World Series trophy and much more.

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|---|---|---|
| 2009 | **Nov. 14**<br>**Free Admission Day** | All fans will receive free admission on this day. |
| | **Dec. 1-22**<br>**A Toy for A Tour** | Children 13 & under who bring a new, unwrapped toy receive a complimentary tour of Turner Field. |
| 2010 | **January**<br>**Two for 10 in 2010** | For the month of January, two people can take a tour of Turner Field for $10 |
| | **February**<br>**Black History Month** | Children 13 & under who read a book about the Negro Leagues receive a complimentary tour. |
| | **March**<br>**Gearing Up for the 2010 Season** | Adults who donate new or gently-used baseball equipment will receive 50% off adult admission to the museum and tours. |

**Call 404-614-2311 for more information on these promotions.**

**TAKE A ONE-HOUR GUIDED TOUR OF TURNER FIELD** to many areas off limits during games, such as the press box, clubhouse, dugout and the SunTrust Club. Group and school tours are offered year-round, including specialized tours on the subjects of math and careers in sports. **Call 404-614-2311.**

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#193 #202 #194

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**$5 | Personalize any Tumbler**
Personalize up to three lines, 13 characters per line. Personalized tumblers require an additional two weeks for delivery. Personalized items cannot be returned. #202

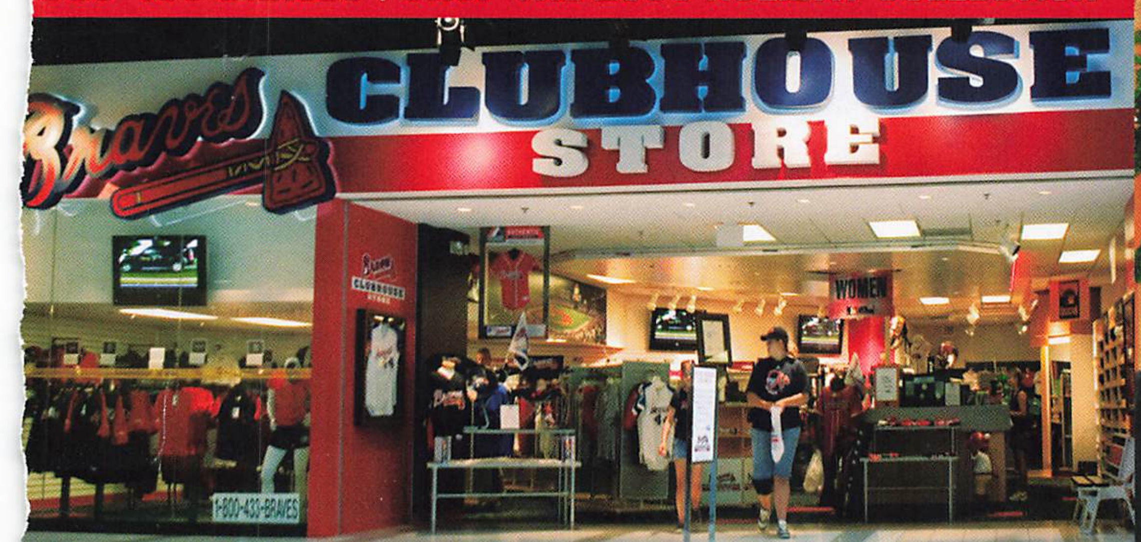
**$20 | Women's Galaxy Short Sleeve Shirt**
60% cotton/40% polyester. Skinny Fit.
Wms sizes: S, M, L, XL. #2218

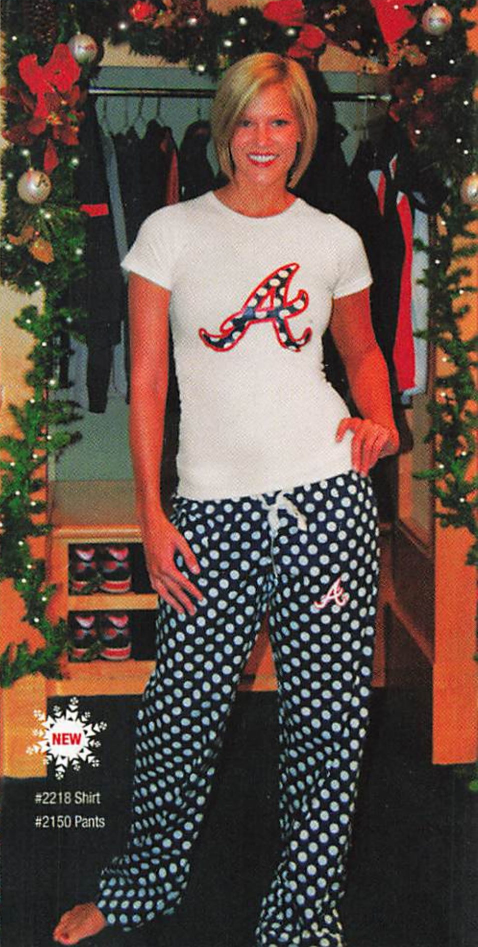
**$25 | Women's Galaxy Pants**
100% cotton. Screened logo.
Wms sizes: S, M, L, XL. #2150

**CLUBHOUSE COLLECTION**

Call 800-433-BRAVES Mon-Fri 8:30 am - 5:00 pm or visit the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center, 10 am - 6 pm daily

## 800-433-BRAVES | SHOP THE 2009 HOLIDAY COLLECTION

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